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Lettice Arnold.

BY MRS. MARSH.

CHAPTER I.

"No, dearest mother, no!" I cannot. What! after all the tenderness, care, and love I have received from you, for now one-and-twenty years, to leave you and my father, in your old age, to yourselves! Oh, no! Oh, no!"

"Nay, my child," said the pale, delicate, nervous woman, thus addressed by a blooming girl whose face beamed with every promise for future happiness, which health and cheerfulness, and eyes filled with warm affections could give. "Nay, my child, don't talk so. You must not talk so. It is not to be thought of." And, as she said these words with effort, her poor heart was dying within her, not only from sorrow at the thought of parting from her darling, but with all sorts of dreary, undefined terrors at the idea of the forlorn, deserted life before her. Abandoned to herself and to servants, so fearful, so weak as she was, and with the poor, invalided, and crippled veteran, her husband, a martyr to that long train of sufferings which honorable wounds, received in the service of country, too often leave behind them, a man at all times so difficult to soothe, so impossible to entertain—and old age creeping upon them both; the little spirit she ever possessed failing; what should she do without this dear, animated, this loving, clever being, who was, in one word everything to her?

But she held to her resolution—no martyr ever more courageously than this trembling, timid woman. A prey to ten thousand imaginary fears, and placed in a position where the help she was now depriving herself of was so greatly needed.

"No, my dear," she repeated, "don't think of it; don't speak of it. You distress me very much. Pray don't, my dearest Catherine."

"But I should be a shocking creature, mamma, to forsake you; and, I am sure, Edgar would despise me as much as I should myself, if I could think of it. I cannot, I ought not to leave you."

The gentle blue eye of the mother was fixed upon the daughter's generous, glowing face. She smothered a sigh. She waited awhile to steady her faltering voice. She wished to hide, if possible, from her daughter the extent of the sacrifice she was making.



LETTICE ARNOLD.

At last she recovered herself sufficiently to speak with composure, and then she said:

"To accept such a sacrifice from a child, I have always thought the most monstrous piece of selfishness of which a parent could be guilty. My love, this does not come upon me unexpectedly. I have, of course, anticipated it. I knew my sweet girl could not be long known and seen without inspiring and returning the attachment of some valuable man. I have resolved—and God strengthen me in this resolve," (she cast up a silent appeal to the fountain of strength and courage)—"that nothing should tempt me to what I consider so base. A parent accept the sacrifice of a life in exchange for the poor remnant of her own! A parent who has had her own portion of the joys of youth in her day, deprive a child of a share in her turn? No, my dearest love, never—never! I would die, and I will die first."

But it was not death she feared. The idea of death did not appall her. What she dreaded was melancholy. She knew the unsoundness of her own nerves; she had often felt her self, as it were, trembling upon the fearful verge of reason, when the mind, unable to support itself, is forced to rest upon another. She had known a feeling, common to many nervous people, I believe, as though the mind would be upset when pressed far, if not helped, strengthened and cheered by some more wholesome mind; and she shrank appalled from the prospect.

But even this could not make her waver in her resolution. She was a generous, just, disinterested woman; though the exigencies of a most delicate constitution, and most susceptible nervous system, had too often thrown upon her—from those who did not understand such things, and whose iron nerves and vigorous health rendered sympathy at such times impossible—the reproach of being a whimsical, selfish hypochondriac.

Poor thing, she knew this well. It was the difficulty of making herself understood; the want of sympathy, the impossibility of rendering needs, most urgent in her case, comprehensible by her friends, which had added so greatly to the timorous cowardice, the fear of circumstances, of changes, which had been the bane of her existence.

And, therefore, this kind, animated, affectionate daughter, whose tenderness seemed never to weary in the task of cheering her; whose activity was never exhausted in the endeavor to assist and serve her; whose good sense and spirit kept everything right at home, and more especially kept those terrible things, the servants, in order—of whom the poor mother, like many other feeble and languid people was so afraid; therefore, this kind daughter was as the very spring of her existence; and

the idea of parting with her was really dreadful. Yet she hesitated not. So did that man behave who stood upon the rampart till he had finished his observation, though his hair turned white with fear. Mrs. Melwyn was a heroic coward of this kind.

She had prayed ardently, fervently, that day, for courage, for resolution, to complete the dreaded sacrifice, and she had found it.

"Oh, Lord! I am thy servant. Do with me what thou wilt. Trembling in spirit, the victim of my infirmity—a poor, selfish, cowardly being, I fall down before Thee. Thou hast showed me what is right—the sacrifice I ought to make. Oh, give me strength in my weakness to be faithful to complete it!"

Thus had she prayed. And now resolved in heart, the poor sinking spirit failing her within, but, as I said, steadying her voice with an almost heroic constancy, she resisted her grateful and pious child's representation: "I have told Edgar—dear as he is to me—strong as are the claims his generous affection gives him over me—that I will not—I cannot forsake you."

"You must not call it forsake," said the mother, gently. "My love, the Lord of life himself has spoken it: 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.'"

"And so he is ready to do," cried Catherine, eagerly. "Yes, mother, he desires nothing better; he respects my scruples; he has offered, dear Edgar! to abandon his profession and come and live here, and help me to take care of you and my father. Was not that beautiful?" and the tears stood in her speaking eyes.

"Beautiful! generous! devoted! My Catherine will be a happy woman;" and the mother smiled. A ray of genuine pleasure warmed her beating heart. This respect in the gay, handsome young officer for the filial scruples of her he loved was indeed beautiful! But the mother knew his spirit too well to listen to this proposal for a moment.

"And abandon his profession? No, my sweet child, that would never, never do."

"But he says he is independent of his profession—that his private fortune, though not large, is enough for such simple, moderate people as he and I are. In short, that he shall be miserable without me, and all that charming stuff, mamma; and that he loves me better, for what he calls, dear fellow, my piety to you. And so, dear mother, he says if you and my father will but consent to take him in, he will do his very best in helping me to make you comfortable; and he is so sweet-tempered, so reasonable, so good, so amiable, I am quite sure he would keep his promise, mamma." And she looked anxiously into her mother's face, waiting for an answer. The temptation was very, very strong.

Again those domestic spectres which had so appalled her poor timorous spirit rose before her. A desolate, dull fireside; her own tendency to melancholy; her poor maimed, suffering, and, alas, too often peevish partner; encroaching, unmanageable servants; the cook, with her careless, saucy ways; the butler, so indifferent and negligent, and her own maid, that Randall, who in secret tyrannized over her, exercising the empire of fear to an extent which Catherine, alive as she was to these evils, did not suspect. And again she asked herself, if these things were disagreeable now, when Catherine was here to take care of her, what would they be when she was left alone?

And then such a sweet picture of happiness presented itself to tempt her—Catherine settled there—settled there forever. That handsome, lively young man, with his sweet, cordial ways and polite observance of everyone, sitting by their hearth, and talking, as he did, to the general of old days and military matters, the only subject in which this aged military man took any interest, reading the newspaper to him, and making such lively, pleasant comments as he read! How should she ever get through the debates, with her breath so short, and her voice so indistinct and low? The general would lose all patience, he hated to hear her attempt to read such things, and always got Catherine or the young Lieutenant-colonel to do it.

Oh! it was a sore temptation. But this poor, dear, good creature resisted it.

"My love," she said, after a little pause, during

which this noble victory was achieved—laugh if you will at the expression, but it was a noble victory over self—"my love," she said, "don't tempt your poor mother beyond her strength. Gladly, gladly, as far as we are concerned, would we enter into this arrangement; but it must not be. No, Catherine; Edgar must not quit his profession. It would not only be a very great sacrifice I am sure now, but it would lay the foundation of endless regrets in future. No, my darling girl, neither his happiness nor your happiness shall be ever sacrificed to mine. A life against a few uncertain years! No, no."

The mother was inflexible. The more these good children offered to give up for her sake, the more she resolved to suffer no such sacrifice to be made.

Edgar could not but rejoice. He was an excellent young fellow, and excessively in love with the charming Catherine, you may be sure, or he never would have thought of offering to abandon a profession for her sake in which he had distinguished himself highly—which opened to him the fairest prospects, and of which he was especially fond—but he was not sorry to be excused. He had resolved upon this sacrifice, for there is something in those who truly love, and whose love is elevated almost to adoration by the moral worth they have observed in the chosen one, which revolts at the idea of lowering the tone of that enthusiastic goodness and self-immolation to principle which has so enchanted them. Edgar could not do it. He could not attempt to persuade this tender generous daughter to consider her own welfare and his, in preference to that of her parents. He could only offer, on his own part, to make the greatest sacrifice which could have been demanded from him. Rather than part from her what would he not do? Everything was possible but that.

However, when the mother positively refused to accept of this act of self-abnegation, I cannot say that he regretted it. No; he thought Mrs. Melwyn quite right in what she said, and he loved and respected both her character and understanding very much more than he had done before.

That night Mrs. Melwyn was very, very low indeed. And when she went up into her dressing-room, and Catherine, having kissed her tenderly, with a heart quite divided between anxiety for her, and a sense of happiness that would make itself felt in spite of all, had retired to her room, the mother sat down, poor thing, in the most comfortable arm-chair that ever was invented, but which imparted no comfort to her; and placing herself by a merry blazing fire, which was reflected from all sorts of cheerful pretty things with which the dressing-room was adorned, her feet upon a warm, soft footstool of Catherine's own working, her elbow resting upon her knee, and her head upon her hand, she, with her eyes bent mournfully upon the fire, began crying very much. And so she sat a long time, thinking and crying, very sorrowful, but not in the least repenting. Meditating upon all sorts of dismal things, filled with all kinds of melancholy forebodings, as to how it would, and must be, when Catherine was really gone, she sank at last into a sorrowful reverie, and sat quite absorbed in her own thoughts, till she—who was extremely punctual in her hour of going to bed—for reasons best known to herself, though never confided to any human being, namely, that her maid disliked very much sitting up for her—started as the clock in the hall sounded eleven and two quarters, and almost with the trepidation of a chidden child, rose and rang the bell. Nobody came. This made her still more uneasy. It was Randall's custom not to answer her mistress' bell the first time, when she was cross. And poor Mrs. Melwyn dreaded few things in this world more than cross looks in those about her, especially in Randall; and that Randall knew perfectly well.

"She must be fallen asleep in her chair, poor thing. It was very thoughtless of me," Mrs. Melwyn did not say, but would have said, if people ever did speak to themselves aloud.

Even in this sort of mute soliloquy she did not venture to say, "Randall will be very ill-tempered and unreasonable." She rang again; and then, after a proper time yielded to the claims of offended dignity, it pleased Mrs. Randall to appear.

"I am very sorry, Randall. Really I had no idea how late it was. I was thinking about Miss

Catherine, and I missed it when it struck ten. I had not the least idea it was so late," began the mistress in an apologizing tone, to which Randall vouchsafed not an answer, but looked like a thunder-cloud, as she went banging up and down the room, opening and shutting drawers with a loud noise, and treading with a rough, heavy step; two things particularly annoying, as she very well knew, to the sensitive nerves of her mistress. But Randall settled it with herself—that as her mistress had kept her out of bed an hour-and-a-half longer than usual, for no reason at all but just to please herself, she should find she was none the better for it.

The poor mistress bore all this with patience for some time. She would have gone on bearing the roughness and the noise, however disagreeable, as long as Randall liked; but her soft heart could not bear those glum, cross looks, and this alarming silence.

"I was thinking of Miss Catherine's marriage, Randall. That was what made me forget the hour. What shall I do without her?"

"Yes, that's just like it," said the insolent Abigail; "nothing ever can content some people. Most ladies would be glad to settle their daughters so well; but some folk make a crying matter of everything. It would be well for poor servants, when they're sitting over the fire, their bones aching to death for very weariness, if they'd something pleasant to think about. They wouldn't be crying for nothing, and keeping all the world out of their beds, like those who care for naught but how to please themselves."

Part of this was said, part muttered, part thought; and the poor timid mistress—one of whose domestic occupations it seemed to be to study the humors of her servants—heard a part and divined the rest.

"Well, Randall, I don't quite hear all you are saying; and perhaps it is as well I do not; but I wish you would give me my things and make haste, for I'm really very tired, and I want to go to bed."

"People can't make more haste than they can."

And so it went on. The maid-servant never relaxing an atom of her offended dignity—continuing to look as ill-humored, and to do everything as disagreeably as she possibly could—and her poor victim, by speaking from time to time in an anxious, most gentle, and almost flattering manner, hoping to mollify her dependent; but all in vain.

"I'll teach her to keep me up again for nothing at all," thought Randall.

And so the poor lady, very miserable in the midst of all her luxuries, at last gained her bed, and lay there not able to sleep for very discomfort. And the Abigail retired to her own warm apartment, where she was greeted with a pleasant fire, by which stood a little nice chocolate simmering, to refresh her before she went to bed—not much less miserable than her mistress, for she was dreadfully out of humor—and thought no hardship upon earth could equal that she endured—forced to sit up in consequence of another's whim when she wanted so sadly to go to bed.

While, thus, all that the most abundant possession of the world's goods could bestow, was marred by the weakness of the mistress and the ill-temper of the maid—the plentiful gifts of fortune rendered valueless by the erroneous facility upon one side, and insolent love of domination on the other; how many in the large metropolis, only a few miles distant, and of which the innumerable lights might be seen brightening, like an Aurora, the southern sky; how many laid down their heads supperless that night! Stretched upon miserable pallets, and ignorant where food was to be found on the morrow to satisfy the cravings of hunger; yet, in the midst of their misery, more miserable, also, because they were not exempt from those pests of existence—our own faults and infirmities.

And even, as it was, how many poor creatures *did* actually lay down their heads that night, far less miserable than poor Mrs. Melwyn. The tyranny of a servant is noticed by the wise man, if I recollect right, as one of the most irritating and insupportable of mortal miseries.

Two young women inhabited one small room of about ten feet by eight, in the upper story of a set of houses somewhere near Mary-le-Bone

Street. These houses appear to have been once intended for rather substantial persons, but have gradually sunk into lodging-houses for the very poor. The premises look upon an old graveyard; a dreary prospect enough, but perhaps preferable to a close street, and are filled with decent but very poor people. Every room appears to serve a whole family, and few of the rooms are much larger than the one I have described.

It was now half-past twelve o'clock, and still the miserable dip tallow candle burned in a dilapidated tin candlestick. The wind whistled with that peculiar wintry sound which betokens that snow is falling; it was very, very cold; the fire was out; and the girl who sat plying her needle by the hearth, which was still a little warmer than the rest of the room, had wrapped up her feet in an old worn-out piece of flannel, and had an old black silk wadded cloak thrown over her to keep her from being almost perished. The room was scantily furnished, and bore an air of extreme poverty, amounting almost to absolute destitution. One by one the little articles of property possessed by its inmates had disappeared to supply the calls of urgent want. An old four-post bedstead, with curtains of worn-out serge, stood in one corner; one mattress, with two small, thin pillows, and a bolster that was almost flat; three old blankets, cotton sheets of the coarsest description upon it; three rush-bottomed chairs, an old claw-table, a very ancient dilapidated chest of drawers—at the top of which were a few battered band-boxes—a miserable bit of carpet before the fire-place; a wooden box for coals; a little low tin fender, a poker, or rather half a poker; a shovel and tongs, much the worse for wear, and a very few kitchen utensils, was all the furniture in the room. What there was, however, was kept clean; the floor was clean, the yellow paint was clean; and, I forgot to say, there was a washing-tub set aside in one corner.

The wind blew shrill, and shook the window, and the snow was heard beating against the panes; the clock went another quarter, but still the indefatigable toiler sewed on. Now and then she lifted up her head, as a sigh came from that corner of the room where the bed stood, and some one might be heard turning and tossing uneasily upon the mattress—then she returned to her occupation and plied her needle with increased assiduity.

The workwoman was a girl of from eighteen to twenty, rather below the middle size, and of a face and form little adapted to figure in a story. One whose life, in all probability, would never be diversified by those romantic adventures which *real* life in general reserves to the beautiful and the highly-gifted. Her features were rather homely, her hair of light brown, *without* golden threads through it, her hands and arms rough and red with cold and labor; her dress ordinary to a degree—her clothes being of the cheapest materials—but then, these clothes were so neat, so carefully mended where they had given way; the hair was so smooth and so closely and neatly drawn round the face; and the face itself had such a sweet expression, that all the defects of line and color were redeemed to the lover of expression, rather than beauty.

She did not look patient, she did not look resigned; she *could* not look cheerful exactly. She looked earnest, composed, busy, and exceedingly kind. She had not, it would seem, thought enough of self in the midst of her privations, to require the exercise of the virtues of patience and resignation; she was so occupied with the sufferings of others that she never seemed to think of her own.

She was naturally of the most cheerful, hopeful temper in the world—those people without selfishness usually are. And, though sorrow had a little lowered the tone of her spirits to composure, and work and disappointment had faded the bright colors of hope; still hope was not entirely gone, nor cheerfulness exhausted. But the predominant expression of every word, and look, and tone, and gesture was kindness—inexhaustible kindness.

I said she lifted her head from time to time as a sigh proceeded from the bed, and its suffering inhabitant tossed and tossed; and at last she broke silence and said:

"Poor Myra, can't you get to sleep?"

"It is so fearful cold," was the reply; "and when will you have done, and come to bed?"

"One quarter of an hour more, and I shall have finished it. Poor Myra, you are so nervous, you never can get to sleep till all is shut up—but have patience, dear, one little quarter of an hour, and then I will throw my clothes over your feet, and I hope you will be a little warmer."

A sigh for all answer; and then the *true* heroine—for she was extremely beautiful, or rather had been, poor thing, for she was too wan and wasted to be beautiful now—lifted up her head, from which fell a profusion of the fairest hair in the world, and leaning her head upon her arm, watched in a sort of impatient patience the progress of the indefatigable needle-moman.

"One o'clock striking, and you hav'n't done yet, Lettice? how slowly you do get on."

"I can not work fast and neatly too, dear Myra. I can not get through, as some do; I wish I could. But my hands are not so delicate and nimble as yours, such swelled clumsy things," she said, laughing a little as she looked at them, swelled, indeed, and all mottled over with the cold! "I can not get over the ground nimbly and well at the same time. You are a fine race-horse, I am a poor little drudging pony, but I will make as much haste as I possibly can."

Myra once more uttered an impatient, fretful sigh, and sunk down again, saying, "My feet are so dreadfully cold!"

"Take this bit of flannel then, and let me wrap them up."

"Nay, but you will want it."

"Oh, I have only five minutes more to stay, and I can wrap the carpet round my feet."

And she laid down her work and went to the bed, and wrapped her sister's delicate, but now icy feet, in the flannel; and then she sat down; and at last the task was finished. And oh, how glad she was to creep to that mattress, and to lay her aching limbs down upon it! Hard it might be, and wretched the pillows, and scanty the covering, but little felt she such inconveniences. She fell asleep almost immediately while her sister still tossed and murmured. Presently Lettice, for Lettice it was, awakened a little, and said, "What is it, love? Poor, poor Myra! Oh, that you could but sleep as I do."

And then she drew her own little pillow from under her head, and put it under her sister's, and tried to make her more comfortable; and she partly succeeded, and at last the poor delicate suffering creature fell asleep, and then Lettice slumbered like a baby.

CHAPTER II.

"O, blessed with temper whose unclouded ray
Can make to-morrow cheerful as to-day:
* * * * * And can hear
Sighs for a sister with unwounded ear."
POPE.—"Characters of Women."

EARLY in the morning, before it was light, while the wintry twilight gleamed through the curtainless window, Lettice was up, dressing herself by the scanty gleam cast from the street lamps into the room, for she could not afford the extravagance of a candle.

She combed and did up her hair with modest neatness; put on her brown stuff only gown, and then going to the chest of drawers—opening one with great precaution, lest she should make a noise, and disturb Myra, who still slumbered—drew out a shawl, and began to fold it as if to put it on.

Alas! poor thing, as she opened it, she became first aware that the threadbare, time-worn fabric had given way in two places. Had it been in one, she might have contrived to conceal the injuries of age; but it was in two.

She turned it; she folded and unfolded; it would not do. The miserable shawl seemed to give way under her hands. It was already so excessively shabby that she was ashamed to go out in it; and it seemed as if it was ready to fall to pieces in sundry other places, this dingy, thin, brown, red, and green old shawl. Mend it would not; besides, she was pressed for time; so, with the appearance of considerable reluctance, she put her hand into the drawer, and took out another shawl.

This was a different affair. It was a warm, and

not very old, plaid shawl, of various colors, well preserved and clean-looking, and, this cold morning, so tempting.

Should she borrow it? Myra was still asleep, but she would be horridly cold when she got up, and she would want her shawl, perhaps; but then Lettice must go out, and must be decent, and there seemed no help for it.

But if she took the shawl, had she not better light the fire before she went out? Myra would be so chilly. But then Myra seldom got up till half-past eight or nine, and it was now not seven.

An hour and a half's, perhaps two hours', useless fire would never do. So after a little deliberation, Lettice contented herself with "laying it," as the housemaids say; that is, preparing the fire to be lighted with a match; and as she took out coal by coal to do this, she perceived with terror how very, very low the little store of fuel was.

"We must have a bushel in to-day," she said. "Better without meat and drink than fire, in such weather as this."

However, she was cheered with the reflection that she should get a little more than usual by the work that she had finished. It had been ordered by a considerate and benevolent lady, who, instead of going to the ready-made linen warehouses for what she wanted, gave herself a good deal of trouble to get at the poor work-women themselves who supplied these houses, so that they should receive the full price for their needle-work, which otherwise must of necessity be divided.

What she should get she did not quite know, for she had never worked for this lady before; and some ladies, though she always got more from private customers than from the shops, would beat her down to the last penny, and give her as little as they possibly could.

Much more than the usual price of such matters people can not, I suppose, habitually give; they should, however, beware of driving hard bargains with the very poor.

Her bonnet looked dreadfully shabby, as poor little Lettice took it out from one of the dilapidated band-boxes that stood upon the chest of drawers; yet it had been carefully covered with a sheet of paper, to guard it from the injuries of the dust and the smoke-loaded air.

The young girl held it upon her hand, turning it round, and looking at it, and she could not help sighing when she thought of the miserably shabby appearance she should make; and she going to a private house, too; and the errand!—linen for the trousseau of a young lady who was going to be married.

What a contrast did the busy imagination draw between all the fine things that young lady was to have and her own destitution! She must needs be what she was—a simple-hearted, God-fearing, generous girl, to whom envious comparisons of others with herself were as impossible as any other faults of the selfish—not to feel as if the difference was, to use the common word upon such occasions, "very hard."

She did not take it so. She did not think that it was very *hard* that others should be happy and have plenty, because she was poor and had nothing. They had not robbed *her*. What they had was not taken from *her*. Nay, at this moment their wealth was overflowing toward her. She should gain in her little way by the general prosperity. The thought of the increased pay came into her mind at this moment in aid of her good and simple-hearted feelings, and she brightened up, and shook her bonnet, and pulled out the ribbons, and made it look as tidy as she could; be- thinking herself that if it possibly could be done, she would buy a bit of black ribbon and make it a little more spruce when she got her money.

And now the bonnet is on, and she does not think it looks very bad, and Myra's shawl, as reflected in the little three-penny glass, looks quite neat. Now she steals to the bed in order to make her apologies to Myra about the shawl, and fire, but Myra still slumbers. It is half-past seven and more, and she must be gone.

The young lady for whom she made the linen lived about twenty miles from town, but she had come up about her things, and was to set off home at nine o'clock that very morning. The linen was to have been sent in the night before, but Lettice had found it impossible to get it done. It n

per force wait till morning to be carried home. The object was to get to the house as soon as the servants should be stirring, so that there would be time for the things to be packed up and accompany the young lady upon her return home.

Now, Lettice is in the street. Oh, what a morning it was! the wind was intensely cold; the snow was blown in buffets against her face; the street slippery; all the mud and mire turned into inky-looking ice. She could scarcely stand, her face was blue with the cold, her hands, in a pair of cotton gloves, so numbed that she could hardly hold the parcel she carried.

She had no umbrella. The snow beat upon her undefended head, and completed the demolition of the poor bonnet, but she comforted herself with the thought that its appearance would now be attributed to the bad weather having spoiled it. Nay (and she smiled as the idea presented itself), was it not possible that she might be supposed to have a better bonnet at home?

So she cheerfully made her way, and at last she entered Grosvenor Square, where lamps were just dying away before the splendid houses, and the wintry twilight discovered the garden, with its trees plastered with dirty snow, while the wind rushed down from the Park colder and bitterer than ever. She could hardly get along at all. A few ragged, good-for-nothing boys were almost the only people yet to be seen about; and they almost laughed and mocked at her, as, holding her bonnet down with one hand, to prevent its absolutely giving way before the wind, she endeavored to carry her parcel, and keep her shawl from flying up with the other.

The jeers and the laughter were uncomfortable to her. The things she found it most difficult to reconcile herself to in her fallen state were the scoffs, and the scorns, and the coarse jests of those once so far, far beneath her; so far, that their very existence, as a class, was once almost unknown, and who were now little, if at all, worse off than herself.

The rude brutality of the coarse, uneducated, and unimproved Saxon, is a terrible grievance to those forced to come into close quarters with such.

At last, however, she entered Green Street, and raised the knocker, and gave one timid humble knock at the door of a moderate sized house, upon the right-hand side as you go up to the Park.

Here lived the benevolent lady of whom I have spoken, who took so much trouble to break through the barriers which in London separate the employers and the employed, and to assist the poor stitchers of her own sex, by doing away with the necessity of that hand, or those many hands, through which their ware has usually to pass, and in each of which something of the recompense thereof must of necessity be detained.

She had never been at the house before; but she had sometimes had to go to other genteel houses, and she had too often found the insolence of the pampered domestics harder to bear than even the rude incivility of the streets.

So she stood reeling very uncomfortable; still more afraid of the effect her bonnet might produce upon the man that should open the door, than upon his superiors.

But "like master, like man," is a stale old proverb, which, like many other old saws of our now despised as *childish* ancestors, is full of pith and truth.

The servant who appeared was a grave, gray-haired man, of somewhat above fifty. He stooped a little in his gait, and had not a very fashionable air; but his countenance was full of kind meaning, and his manner so gentle, that it seemed respectful even to a poor girl like this.

Before hearing her errand, observing how cold she looked, he bade her come in and warm herself at the hall stove; and shutting the door in the face of the chill blast, that came rushing forward as if to force its way into the house, he then returned to her, and asked her errand.

"I come with the young lady's work. I was so sorry that I could not possibly get it done in time to send it in last night; but I hope I have not put her to any inconvenience. I hope her trunks are not made up. I started almost before it was light this morning."

"Well, my dear, I hope not; but it was a pity you could not get it done last night. Mrs. Danvers

likes people to be exact to the moment and punctual in performing promises, you must know. However, I'll take it up without loss of time, and I dare say it will be all right."

"Is it come at last?" asked a sweet, low voice, as Reynolds entered the drawing-room. "My love, I really began to be frightened for your pretty things," the speaker went on, turning to a young lady who was making an early breakfast before a noble blazing fire, and who was no other person than Catherine Melwyn.

"Oh, madam! I was not if the least uneasy about them, I was quite sure they would come at last."

"I wish, my love," said Mrs. Danvers, sitting down by the fire, "I could have shared in your security. Poor creatures! the temptation is sometimes so awfully great. The pawnbroker is dangerously near. So easy to evade all inquiry by changing one miserably obscure lodging for another, into which it is almost impossible to be traced. And, to tell the truth, I had not used you quite well, my dear; for I happened to know nothing of the previous character of these poor girls, but that they were certainly very neat workwomen; and they were so out of all measure poor, that I yielded to temptation. And that, you see, my love, had its usual effect of making me suspicious of the power of temptation over others."

Mrs. Danvers had once been one of the loveliest women that had ever been seen: the face of an angel, the form of the goddess of beauty herself; manners the softest, the most delightful. A dress that by its exquisite good taste and elegance enhanced every other charm, and a voice so sweet and harmonious that it made its way to every heart.

Of all this loveliness the sweet, harmonious voice alone remained. Yet had the sad eclipse of so much beauty been succeeded by a something so holy, so saint-like, so tender, that the being who stood now shorn by sorrow and suffering of all her earthly charms, seemed only to have progressed nearer to heaven by the exchange.

Her life had, indeed, been one shipwreck, in which all she prized had gone down. Husband, children, parents, sister, brother—all!—every one gone. It had been a fearful ruin. That she could not survive this wreck of every earthly joy was expected by all her friends; but she had lived on. She stood there, an example of the triumph of those three—faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these was charity.

In faith she rested upon the "unseen," and the world of things "seen" around her shrunk into insignificance. In hope she looked forward to that day when tears should be wiped from all eyes, and the lost and severed meet to part never again. In charity—in other words, love—she filled that aching, desolate heart with fresh affections, warm and tender, if not possessing the joyous gladness of earlier days.

Every sorrowing human being, every poor sufferer, be they who they might, or whence they might, found a place in that compassionate heart. No wonder it was filled to overflowing; there are so many sorrowing sufferers in this world.

She went about doing good. Her whole life was one act of pity.

Her house was plainly furnished. The "mutton chops with a few greens and potatoes"—laughed at in a recent trial, as if indifference to one's own dinner were a crime—might have served her. She often was no better served. Her dress was conventual in its simplicity. Every farthing she could save upon herself was saved for the poor.

You must please to recollect that she stood perfectly alone in the world, and that there was not a human creature that could suffer by this exercise of a sublime and universal charity. Such peculiar devotion to one object is only permitted to those whom God has severed from their kind, and marked out, as it were, for the generous career.

Her days were passed in visiting all those dismal places in this great city, where lowly wretches "repairs to die," or where degradation and depravity, the children of want, hide themselves. She sat by the bed of the inmate of the hospital, pouring the soft balm of her consolation upon the suffering and lowly heart. In such places her presence was hailed as the first and greatest of blessings. Every

one was melted, or was awed into good behavior by her presence. The most hardened of brandy-drinking nurses was softened and amended by her example.

The situation of the young women who have to gain their livelihood by their needle had peculiarly excited her compassion, and to their welfare she more especially devoted herself. Her rank and position in society gave her a ready access to many fine ladies who had an immensity to be done for them: and to many fine dress-makers who had this immensity to do.

She was indefatigable in her exertions to diminish the evils to which the young ladies—"improvers," I believe, is the technical term—are in too many of these establishments exposed. She it was who got the work-rooms properly ventilated and properly warmed. She it was who insisted upon the cruelty and the wretchedness of keeping up the poor girls hour after hour from their natural rest, till their strength was exhausted; the very means by which they were to earn their bread taken away; and they were sent into decline and starvation. She made fine ladies learn to allow more time for the preparation of their dresses; and fine ladies' dress-makers to learn to say, "No."

One of the great objects of her exertions was to save the poor plain-sewers from the necessary loss occasioned by the middlemen. She did not say whether the shops exacted too much labor, or not, for their pay; with so great a competition for work, and so much always lying unsold upon their boards it was difficult to decide. But she spared no trouble to get these poor women employed direct by those who wanted sewing done; and she taught to feel ashamed of themselves those indolent fine ladies who, rather than give themselves a little trouble to increase a poor creature's gains, preferred going to the ready-made shops, "because the other was such a bore."

In one of her visits among the poor of Marylebone, she had accidentally met with these two sisters, Lettice Arnold and Myra. There was something in them both above the common stamp, which might be discerned in spite of their squalid dress and miserable chamber; but she had not had time to inquire into their previous history—which, indeed, they seemed unwilling to tell. Catherine, preparing her wedding clothes, and well knowing how anxious Mrs. Danvers was to obtain work, had reserved a good deal for her; and Mrs. Danvers had entrusted some of it to Lettice, who was too wretchedly destitute to be able to give any thing in the form of a deposit. Hence her uneasiness when the promised things did not appear to the time.

And hence the rather grave looks of Reynolds, who could not endure to see her mistress vexed.

"Has the workwoman brought her bill with her, Reynolds?" asked Mrs. Danvers.

"I will go and ask."

"Stay, ask her to come up; I should like to inquire how she is going on, and whether she has any other work in prospect."

Reynolds obeyed; and soon the door opened, and Lettice, poor thing, a good deal ashamed of her own appearance, was introduced into this warm and comfortable breakfast-room, where, however, as I have said, there was no appearance of luxury, except the pretty, neat breakfast, and the blazing fire.

"Good-morning, my dear," said Mrs. Danvers, kindly; "I am sorry you have had such a wretched walk this morning. Why did you not come last night? Punctuality, my dear, is the soul of business, and if you desire to form a private connection for yourself, you will find it of the utmost importance to attend to it. This young lady is just going off, and there is barely time to put up the things."

Catherine had her back turned to the door, and was quietly continuing her breakfast. She did not even look round as Mrs. Danvers spoke, but when a gentle voice replied:

"Indeed, madam, I beg your pardon. Indeed, I did my very best, but"—

She started, looked up, and rose hastily from her chair. Lettice started, too, on her side, as she did so; and, advancing a few steps, exclaimed, "Catherine!"

"It must—it is—it is you!" cried Catherine hastily, coming forward and taking her by the

hand. She gazed with astonishment at the worn and weather-beaten face, the miserable attire, the picture of utter wretchedness before her. "You!" she kept repeating, "Lettice! Lettice Arnold! Good Heavens! where are they all? Where is your father? Your mother? Your sister?"

"Gone!" said the poor girl. "Gone—everyone gone but poor Myra!"

"And she—where is *she*? The beautiful creature, that used to be the pride of poor Mrs. Price's heart. How lovely she was! And you, dear, dear Lettice, how can you, how have you come to this?"

Mrs. Danvers stood like one petrified with astonishment while this little scene was going on. She kept looking at the two girls, but said nothing.

"Poor, dear Lettice!" Catherine went on in a tone of the utmost affectionate kindness, "have you come all through the streets and alone this most miserable morning? And working—working for me! Good Heavens! how has all this come about?"

"But come to the fire first," she continued, taking hold of the almost frozen hand.

Mrs. Danvers now came forward.

"You seem to have met with an old acquaintance, Catherine. Pray come to the fire, and sit down and warm yourself; and have you breakfasted?"

Lettice hesitated. She had become so accustomed to her fallen condition, that it seemed to her that she could no longer with propriety sit down to the same table with Catherine.

Catherine perceived this, and it shocked and grieved her excessively. "Do come and sit down," she said, encouraged by Mrs. Danvers's invitation, "and tell us have you breakfasted? But though you have a warm cup of tea this cold morning must be comfortable."

And she pressed her forward, and seated her, half reluctant, in an arm-chair that stood by the fire; then she poured out a cup of tea, and carried it to her, repeating:

"Won't you eat? Have you breakfasted?"

The plate of bread-and-butter looked delicious to the half-starved girl; the warm cup of tea seemed to bring life into her. She had been silent from surprise, and a sort of humiliated embarrassment; but now her spirits began to revive, and she said, "I never expected to have seen you again, Miss Melwyn!"

"Miss Melwyn! What does that mean? Dear Lettice, how has all this come about?"

"My father was ill the last time you were in Nottinghamshire, do you not recollect, Miss Melwyn? He never recovered of that illness; but it lasted nearly two years. During that time your aunt, Mrs. Montague, died; and her house was sold, and new people came; and you never were at Castle Rising afterward."

"No—indeed—and from that day to this have never chanced to hear anything of its inhabitants. But Mrs. Price, your aunt, who was so fond of Myra, what is become of her?"

"She died before my poor father."

"Well; but she was rich. Did she do nothing?"

"Everybody thought her rich, because she spent a good deal of money; but hers was only income. Our poor aunt was no great economist—she made no savings."

"Well; and your mother? I cannot understand it. No; I cannot understand it," Catherine kept repeating. So horrible! dear, dear Lettice—and your shawl is quite wet, and so is your bonnet, poor, dear girl. Why did you not put up your umbrella?"

"For a very good reason, dear Miss Melwyn; because I do not possess one."

"Call me Catherine, won't you? or I will not speak to you again." But Mrs. Danvers's inquiring looks seemed now to deserve a little attention. She seemed impatient to have the enigma of this strange scene solved. Catherine caught her eye, and, turning from her friend, with whom she had been so much absorbed as to forget everything else, she said:

"Lettice Arnold is a clergyman's daughter, ma'am."

"I began to think something of that sort," said Mrs. Danvers; "but, my dear young lady, what can have brought you to this terrible state of destitution?"

"Misfortune upon misfortune, madam. My father was, indeed, a clergyman, and held the little vicarage of Castle Rising. There Catherine," looking affectionately up at her, "met me upon her visits to her aunt, Mrs. Montague."

"We have known each other from children," put in Catherine.

The door opened, and Reynolds appeared:

"The cab is waiting, if you please, Miss Melwyn."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I can't go just this moment. Bid the man wait."

"It is late already," said Reynolds taking out his watch. "The train starts in twenty minutes."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! and when does the next go? I can't go by this. Can I, dear Mrs. Danvers? It is impossible."

"Another starts in an hour afterward."

"Oh! that will do—tell Sarah to be ready for that. Well, my dear, go on, go on—dear Lettice, you were about to tell us how all this happened—but just another cup of tea. Do you like it strong?"

"I like it any way," said Lettice, who was beginning to recover her spirits, "I have not tasted anything so comfortable for a very long time."

"Dear me! dear me!"

"You must have suffered very much, I fear, my dear young lady," said Mrs. Danvers, in a kind voice of interest, "before you could have sunk to the level of that miserable home where I found you."

"Yes," said Lettice. "Every one suffers very much, be the descent slow or rapid, when he has to fall so far. But what were my sufferings to poor Myra's!"

"And why were your sufferings as nothing in comparison with poor Myra's?"

"Ah, madam, there are some in this world not particularly favored by nature or fortune, who were born to be denied; who are used to it from their childhood—it becomes a sort of second nature to them, as it were. They scarcely feel it. But a beautiful girl, adored by an old relation, accustomed to every sort of indulgence and luxury! They doated upon the very ground she trod on. Oh! to be cast down to such misery, that is dreadful."

"I don't see—I don't know," said Catherine, who, like the world in general, however much they might admire, and however much too many might flatter Myra, greatly preferred Lettice to her sister.

"I don't know," said she, doubtfully.

"Ah! but you would know if you could see!" said the generous girl. "If you could see what she suffers from everything—from things that I do not even feel, far less care for—you would be so sorry for her."

Mrs. Danvers looked with increasing interest upon the speaker. She seemed to wish to go on with the conversation about this sister, so much pitied; so she said, "I believe what you say is very true. Very true, Catherine, in spite of your skeptical looks. Some people really do suffer very much more than others under the same circumstances of privation."

"Yes, selfish people like Myra," thought Catherine, but she said nothing.

"Indeed, madam, it is so. They seem to feel everything so much more. Poor Myra—I can sleep like a top in our bed, and she very often cannot close her eyes—and the close room, and the poor food. I can get along—I was made to rough it, my poor aunt always said—but Myra!"

"Well but," rejoined Catherine, "do pray tell us how you came to this cruel pass? Your poor father?"

"His illness was very lingering and very painful—and several times a surgical operation was required. My poor mother could not bear—could any of us?—to have it done by the poor blundering operator of that remote village. To have a surgeon from Nottingham was very expensive; and then the medicines; and the necessary food and attendance. The kindest and most provident father cannot save much out of one hundred and ten pounds a year, and what was saved was soon all gone."

"Well, well," repeated Catherine, her eyes fixed with intense interest upon the speaker.

"His deathbed was a painful scene," Lettice

went on, her face displaying her emotion, while she with great effort restrained her tears: "he trusted in God; but there was a fearful prospect before us, and he could not help trembling for his children. Dear, dear father! he reproached himself for his want of faith, and would try to strengthen us, 'but the flesh,' he said, 'was weak.' He could not look forward without anguish. It was a fearful struggle to be composed and confiding—he could not help being anxious. It was for us, you know, not for himself."

"Frightful!" cried Catherine, indignantly; frightful! that a man of education, a scholar, a gentleman, a man of so much activity in doing good, and so much power in preaching it, should be brought to this. One hundred and ten pounds a year, was that all? How could you exist?"

"We had the house and the garden besides, you know, and my mother was such an excellent manager; and my father! No religious of the severest order was ever more self-denying, and there was only me. My Aunt Price, you know, took Myra—Myra had been delicate from a child, and was so beautiful, and she was never made to rough it, my mother and my aunt said. Now, I seemed made expressly for the purpose," she added, smiling with perfect simplicity.

"And his illness, so long! and so expensive!" exclaimed Catherine, with a sort of cry.

"Yes, it was—and to see the pains that he took that it should not be expensive. He would be quite annoyed if my mother got anything nicer than usual for his dinner. She used to be obliged to make a mystery of it; and we were forced almost to go down upon our knees to get him to have the surgeon from Nottingham. Nothing but the idea that his life would be more secure in such hands could have persuaded him into it. He knew how important that was to us. As for the pain which the bungling old doctor hard by would have given him, he would have borne that rather than have spent money. Oh, Catherine! there have been times upon times when I have envied the poor. They have hospitals to go to; they are not ashamed to ask for a little wine from those who have it; they can beg when they are in want of a morsel of bread. It is natural. It is right—they feel it to be right. But oh! for those, as they call it, better born, and educated to habits of thought like those of my poor father! Want is, indeed, like an armed man, when he comes into their dwellings."

"Too true, my dear young lady," said Mrs. Danvers, whose eyes were by this time moist; "but go on, if it does not pain you too much, your story is excessively interesting. There is yet a wide step between where your relation leaves us, and where I found you."

"We closed his eyes at last in deep sorrow. Excellent man, he deserved a better lot! So at least, it seems to me—but who knows? Nay, he would have reproved me for saying so. He used to say of himself, so cheerfully, 'It's a rough road, but it leads to a good place.' Why could he not feel this for his wife and children? He found that so very difficult!"

"He was an excellent and a delightful man," said Catherine. Well?"

"Well, my dear, when he had closed his eyes, there was his funeral. We could not have a parish funeral. The veriest pauper has a piety toward the dead which revolts at that. We did it as simply as we possibly could, consistently with common decency; but they charge so enormously for such things; and my poor mother would not contest it. When I remonstrated a little, and said I thought it was right, to prevent others being treated in the same way, who could not better afford it than we could, I never shall forget my mother's face: 'I dare say—yes, you are right, Lettice; quite right—but not this—not *this*. I cannot debate this matter. Forgive me, dear girl; it is weak—but I cannot.'

"This expense exhausted all that was left of our little money; only a few pounds remained when our furniture had been sold, and we were obliged to give up possession of that dear, dear, little parsonage, and we were without a roof to shelter us. You remember it, Catherine!"

"Remember it! so be sure I do. That sweet little place. The tiny house, all covered over with honey-suckles and jasmines. How sweet

they *did* smell. And your flower-garden, Lettice, how you used to work in it. It was that which made you so hale and strong, Aunt Montague said. She admired your industry so, you can't think. She used to say you were worth a whole bundle of fine ladies."

"Did she?" and Lettice smiled again. She was beginning to look cheerful, in spite of her dismal story. There was something so inveterately cheerful in that temper, that nothing could entirely subdue it. The warmth of her generous nature it was that kept the blood and spirits flowing.

"It was a sad day when we parted from it. My poor mother! How she kept looking back—looking back—striving not to cry; and Myra was drowned in tears."

"And what did you do?"

"I am sure I don't know; I was so sorry for them both; I quite forget all the rest."

"But how came you to London?" asked Mrs. Danvers. "Everybody, without other resource, seems to come to London. The worst place, especially for women, they can possibly come to. People are so completely lost in London. Nobody dies of want, nobody is utterly and entirely destitute of help or friends, except in London."

"A person we knew in the village, and to whom my father had been very kind, had a son who was employed in one of the great linen-warehouses, and he promised to endeavor to get us needlework; and we flattered ourselves, with industry, we should, all three together, do pretty well. So we came to London, and took a small lodging, and furnished it with the remnant of our furniture. We had our clothes, which, though plain enough, were a sort of little property, you know. But when we came to learn the prices they actually paid for work, it was really frightful! Work fourteen hours a day apiece, and we could only gain between three and four shillings a week each—sometimes hardly that. There was our lodging to pay, three shillings a week, and six shillings left for firing and food for three people; this was in the weeks of *plenty*. Oh! it was frightful!"

"Horrible!" echoed Catherine.

"We could not bring ourselves down to it at once. We hoped and flattered ourselves that by-and-bye we should get some work, that would pay better; and when we wanted a little more food, or in very cold days a little more fire, we were tempted to sell or pawn one article after another. At last my mother fell sick, and then all went; she died, and she *had* a pauper's funeral," concluded Lettice, turning very pale.

They were all three silent. At last Mrs. Danvers began again:

"That was not the lodging I found you in?"

"No, madam, that was too expensive. We left it, and we only pay one-and-sixpence a week for this, the furniture being our own."

"The cab is at the door, Miss Melwyn," again interrupted Reynolds.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I can't go, indeed, Mrs. Danvers, I can't go;" with a pleading look, "may I stay one day longer?"

"Most gladly would I keep you, my dearest love; but you father and mother—and they will have sent to meet you."

"And suppose they have, John must go back; but stay, stay, Sarah shall go and take all my boxes, and say I am coming to-morrow; that will do."

"And you travel alone by railway? Your mother will never like that."

"I am ashamed," cried Catherine, with energy, to think of such mere conventional difficulties, when here I stand in the presence of real misery. Indeed, my dear Mrs. Danvers, my mother will be quite satisfied when she hears why I staid. I must be an insensible creature if I could go away without seeing more of dear Lettice."

Lettice looked up so pleased, so grateful, so happy.

"Well, my love, I think your mother will not be uneasy, as Sarah goes; and I just remember Mrs. Sands travels your way to-morrow, so she will take care of you; for taken care of you *must* be, my pretty Catherine, till you are a little less young, and somewhat less handsome."

And she patted the sweet, full, rosy cheek.

Catherine was very pretty indeed, if you care to know that, and so it was settled.

And now, Lettice having enjoyed a happier hour than she had known for many a long day, began to recollect herself, and to think of poor Myra.

She rose from her chair, and taking up her bonnet and shawl, which Catherine had hung before the fire to dry, seemed preparing to depart.

Then both Catherine and Mrs. Danvers began to think of her little bill, which had not been settled yet. Catherine felt excessively awkward and uncomfortable at the idea of offering her old friend and companion money; but Mrs. Danvers was too well acquainted with real misery, had too much approbation for that spirit which is not above *earning*, but is above begging, to have any embarrassment in such a case.

"Catherine, my dear," she said, "you owe Miss Arnold some money. Had you not better settle it before she leaves?"

Both the girls blushed.

"Nay, my dears," said Mrs. Danvers, kindly: "why this? I am sure," coming up to them, and taking Lettice's hand, "I hold an honest hand here, which is not ashamed to labor, when it has been the will of God that it shall be by her own exertions that she obtains her bread, and part of the bread of another, if I mistake not. What you have nobly earned as nobly receive. Humiliation belongs to the idle and the dependent, not to one who maintains herself."

The eyes of Lettice glistened, and she could not help gently pressing the hand which held hers.

Such sentiments were congenial to her heart. She had never been able to comprehend the conventional distinctions between what is honorable or degrading, under the fetters of which so many lose the higher principles of independence—true honesty and true honor. To work for her living had never lessened her in her own eyes; and she had found, with a sort of astonishment, that it was to sink her in the eyes of others. To deny herself everything in food, furniture, clothing, in order to escape debt, and add in her little way to the comforts of those she loved, had ever appeared to her noble and praiseworthy. She was as astonished, as many such a heart has been before her, with the course of this world's esteem, too often measured by what people *spend* upon themselves, rather than by what they spare. I cannot get that story in the newspaper—the contempt expressed for the dinner of one mutton chop, potatoes, and a few greens—out of my head.

Catherine's confusion had, in a moment of weakness, extended to Lettice. She had felt ashamed to be paid as a workwoman by one once her friend, and in social rank her equal; but now she raised her head, with a noble frankness and spirit.

"I am very much obliged to you for recollecting it, madam, for in truth the money is very much wanted; and if," turning to her old friend, "my dear Catherine can find me a little more work, I should be very much obliged to her."

Catherine again changed color. Work! she was longing to offer her money. She had twenty pounds in her pocket, a present from her god-mother, to buy something pretty for the wedding. She was burning with desire to put it into Lettice's hand.

She stammered—she hesitated.

"Perhaps you *have* no more work just now," said Lettice. "Never mind, then; I am sure when there is an opportunity, you will remember what a pleasure it will be to me to work for you; and that a poor needlewoman is very much benefitted by having private customers."

"My dear, dear Lettice!" and Catherine's arms were round her neck. She could not help shedding a few tears.

"But to return to business," said Mrs. Danvers, "for I see Miss Arnold is impatient to be gone. What is your charge, my dear? These slips are tucked and beautifully stitched and done."

"I should not get more than threepence, at most fourpence, at the shops for them. Should you think ninepence an unreasonable charge? I believe it is what you would pay if you had them done at the schools."

"Threepence, fourpence, ninepence! Good Heavens!" cried Catherine; "so beautifully done as these are; and then your needles and thread, you have made no charge for them."

"We pay for those ourselves," said Lettice.

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Danvers, "what Catherine would have to pay for this work, if bought from a linen warehouse, would at least be fifteen pence, and not nearly so well done, for these are beautiful. Come, you must ask eighteen pence; there are six of them; nine shillings, my dear."

The eyes of poor Lettice quite glistened. She could not refuse. She felt that to seem over delicate upon this little enhancement of price would be really great moral indelicacy. "Thank you," said she, "you are very liberal; but it must only be for this once. If I am to be your needlewoman in ordinary, Catherine, I must only be paid what you would pay to others."

She smiled pleasantly as she said this; but Catherine could not answer the smile. She felt very sad as she drew the nine shillings from her purse, longing to make them nine sovereigns. But she laid the money at last before Lettice, upon the table.

Lettice took it up, and bringing out an old dirty leathern purse, was going to put it in.

"At least, let me give you a better purse," said Catherine, eagerly, offering her own handsome one, yet of a strong texture, for it was her business purse.

"They would think I had stolen it," said Lettice, putting it aside. "No, thank you, dear, kind Catherine. Consistency in all things; and my old leather convenience seems to me much more consistent with my bonnet than your beautiful one. Not but that I shall get myself a decent bonnet *now*, for really this is a shame to be seen. And so, good-bye; and farewell, madam. When you *have* work, you won't forget me, will you, dear?"

"Oh, Catherine has plenty of work," put in Mrs. Danvers, "but somehow she is not quite herself this morning"—again looking at her very kindly. "You can not wonder, Miss Arnold, that she is much more agitated by this meeting than you can be. My dear, there are those pocket-handkerchiefs to be marked, which we durst not trust to an unknown person. That will be a profitable job. My dear, you would have to pay five shillings apiece at Mr. Morris's for having them embroidered according to that pattern you fixed upon, and which I doubt not your friend and her sister can execute. There are six of them to be done."

"May I look at the pattern? Oh, yes! I think I can do it. I will take the greatest possible pains, at five shillings each! Oh! madam!—Oh, Catherine!—what a benefit this will be."

Again Catherine felt it impossible to speak. She could only stoop down, take the poor hand, so roughened with hardships, and raise it to her lips.

The beautiful handkerchiefs were brought.

"I will only take one at a time, if you please. These are two valuable to be risked at our lodgings. When I have done this, I will fetch another, and so on. I shall not lose time in getting them done, depend upon it," said Lettice, cheerfully.

"Take two, at all events, and then Myra can help you."

"No, only one at present, at least, thank you."

She did not say what she knew to be very true, that Myra could not help her. Myra's fingers were twice as delicate as her own; and Myra, before their misfortunes, had mostly spent her time in ornamental work—her aunt holding plain sewing to be an occupation rather beneath so beautiful and distinguished a creature. Nevertheless, when work became of so much importance to them all, and fine work especially, as gaining so much better a recompense in proportion to the time employed, Myra's accomplishments in this way proved very useless. She had not been accustomed to that strenuous, and to the indolent, painful effort, which is necessary to do anything *well*. To exercise self-denial, self-government, persevering industry, virtuous resistance against weariness, disgust, aching fingers, and heavy eyes—temptations which haunt the indefatigable laborer in such callings, she was incapable of: the consequence was, that she worked in a very inferior manner. While Lettice, as soon as she became aware of the importance of this accomplishment as to the means of increasing her power of adding to her mother's comforts, had been indefatigable in her endeavors to accomplish

herself in the art, and was become a very excellent workwoman.

CHAPTER III.

"Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,
As ever sullied the fair face of light."—POPE.

AND now she is upon her way home. And oh! how lightly beats that honest, simple heart in her bosom; and, oh! how cheerily sits her spirit upon its throne. How happily, too, she looks about at the shops, and thinks of what she shall buy; not of the very cheapest and poorest that is to be had for money, but upon what she shall choose!

Then she remembers the fable of the Maid and the Milk-pail, and grows prudent and prosaic; and resolves that she will not spend her money till she has got it. She began to limit her desires, and to determine that she will only lay out six shillings this morning, and keep three in her purse, as a resource for contingencies. Nay, she begins to grow a little Martha-like and careful, and to dream about savings-banks; and putting half-a-crown in, out of the way of temptation, when she is paid for her first pocket-handkerchief.

Six shillings, however, she means to expend for the more urgent wants. Two shillings coals; one shilling a very, very coarse straw bonnet; fourpence ribbon to trim it with; one shilling bread, and sixpence potatoes, a half-pennyworth of milk, and then, what is left?—one shilling and a penny-half-penny. Myra shall have a cup of tea, with sugar in it; and a muffin, that she loves so, and a bit of butter. Four-pennyworth of tea, three-pennyworth of sugar, two-pennyworth of butter, one penny muffin; and threepence-half-penny remains in the good little manager's hands.

She came up the dark stairs of her lodgings so cheerfully, followed by a boy lugging up her coals, she carrying the other purchases herself—so happy! quite radiant with joy—and opened the door of the miserable little apartment.

It was a bleak wintry morning. Not a single ray of the sun could penetrate the gray fleecy covering in which the houses were wrapped; yet the warmth of the smoke and the fires was sufficient so far to assist the temperature of the atmosphere as to melt the dirty snow; which now kept dripping from the roofs in dreary cadence, and splashing upon the pavement below.

The room looked so dark, so dreary, so dismal! Such a contrast to the one she had just left! Myra was up, and was dressed in her miserable, half-worn cotton gown, which was thrown round her in the most untidy, comfortless manner. She could not think it worth while to care how *such* a gown was put on. Her hair was dingy and disordered; to be sure there was but a broken comb to straighten it with, and who could do anything with *such* a comb? She was cowering over the fire, which was now nearly extinguished, and, from time to time, picking up bit by bit of the cinders, as they fell upon the little hearth, putting them on again—endeavoring to keep the fire alive. Wretchedness in the extreme was visible in her dress, her attitude, her aspect.

She turned round as Lettice entered, and saying pettishly, "I thought you never *would* come back, and I do so want my shawl," returned to her former attitude, with her elbows resting upon her knees, and her chin upon the palms of her hands.

"I have been a sad long time, indeed," said Lettice, good-humoredly; "you must have been tired to death of waiting for me, and wondering what I *could* be about. But I've brought something back which will make you amends. And in the first place, here's your shawl," putting it over her, "and thank you for the use of it—though I would not ask your leave, because I could not bear to waken you. But I was *sure* you would lend it me—and now for the fire. For once in a way we *will* have a good one. There, Sim, bring in the coals, put them in that wooden box there. Now for a good lump or two." And on they went; and the expiring fire began to crackle and sparkle, and make a pleased noise, and a blaze soon caused even that room to look a little cheerful.

"Oh, dear! I am so glad we may for once be allowed to have coal enough to put a spark of life into us," said Myra.

Lettice had by this time filled the little old tin kettle, and was putting it upon the fire, and then

she fetched an old tea-pot with a broken spout, a saucer without a cup, and a cup without a saucer; and putting the two together, for they were usually divided between the sisters, said:

"I have got something for you which I know you will like still better than a blaze, a cup of tea. And to warm your poor fingers, see if you can't toast yourself this muffin," handing it to her upon what was now a two-pronged, but had once been a three-pronged fork.

"But what have you got for yourself?" Myra had at least the grace to say.

"Oh! I have had *such* a breakfast. And *such* a thing has happened! but I cannot and will not tell you till you have had your own breakfast, poor, dear girl. You must be ravenous—at least, I should be in your place—but you never seem so hungry as I am, poor Myra. However, I was sure you could eat a muffin."

"That was very good-natured of you, Lettice, to think of it. It *will* be a treat. But oh! to think that we should be brought to this—to think a muffin—one muffin—a treat!" she added dismally.

"Let us be thankful when we get it, however," said her sister; "upon my word, Mrs. Bull has given us some very good coals. Oh, how the kettle does enjoy them! It must be quite a treat to our kettle to feel *hot*—poor thing! Lukewarm is the best it mostly attains to. Hear how it buzzes and hums, like a pleased child."

And so she prattled, and put a couple of spoonfuls of tea into the cracked teapot. There were but about six in the paper, but Myra liked her tea strong, and she should have it as she pleased this once. Then she poured out a cup, put in some milk and sugar, and, with a smile of ineffable affection, presented it, with the muffin she had buttered, to her sister. Myra *did* enjoy it. To the poor, weedy, delicate thing, a cup of good tea, with something to eat that she could relish, *was* a real blessing. Mrs. Danvers was right so far: things did really go much harder with her than with Lettice; but then she made them six times worse by her discontent and murmuring spirit, and Lettice made them six times better by her cheerfulness and generous disregard of self.

While the one sister was enjoying her breakfast, the other, who really began to feel tired, was very glad to sit down and enjoy the fire. So she took the other chair, and, putting herself upon the opposite side of the little table, began to stretch out her feet to the fender, and feel herself quite comfortable. Three shillings in her purse, and threepence halfpenny to do just what she liked with! perhaps buy Myra a roll for tea; there would be butter enough left.

Then she began her story. But the effect it produced was not exactly what she had expected. Instead of sharing in her sister's thankful joy for this unexpected deliverance from the most abject want, through the discovery of a friend—able and willing to furnish employment herself, and to recommend them, as, in her hopeful view of things, Lettice anticipated, to others, and promising them work of a description that would pay well, and make them quite comfortable—Myra began to draw a repining contrast between Catherine's situation and her own.

The poor beauty had been educated by her silly and romantic old aunt to look forward to making some capital match. "She had such a sweet pretty face, and so many accomplishments of mind and manner," for such was the way the old woman loved to talk. Accomplishments of mind and manner, by the way, are indefinite things; anybody may put in a claim for them on the part of anyone. As for the more positive acquirements which are to be seen, handled, or heard and appreciated—such as dancing, music, languages, and so forth, Myra had as slender a portion of those as usually falls to the lot of indulged, idle, nervous girls. The poor beauty felt all the bitterness of the deepest mortification at what she considered this cruel contrast of her fate as compared to Catherine's. She had been indulged in that pernicious habit of the mind—the making claims. "With claims no better than her own," was her expression. For though Catherine had more money, everybody said Catherine was *only* pretty, which last sentence implied that there was another per-

son of Catherine's acquaintance, who was positively and extremely beautiful.

Lettice, happily for herself, had never been accustomed to make "claims." She had, indeed, never distinctly understood whom such claims were to be made upon. She could not see why it was very *hard* that other people should be happier than herself. I am sure she would have been very sorry if she had thought that everybody was as uncomfortable.

She was always very sorry when she heard her sister talking in this manner, partly because she felt it could not be quite right, and partly because she was sure it did no good, but made matters a great deal worse; but she said nothing. Exhortations, indeed, only made matters worse; nothing offended Myra so much as an attempt to make her more comfortable, and to reconcile her to the fate she complained of as so *hard*.

Even when let alone, it would often be some time before she recovered her good humor; and this was the case now. I am afraid she was a little vexed that Lettice and not herself had met with the good luck first to stumble upon Catherine, and also a little envious of the pleasing impression it was plain her sister had made. So she began to fall foul of Lettice's new bonnet, and to say, in a captious tone:

"You got money enough to buy yourself a new bonnet, I see."

"Indeed, I did," Lettice answered, with simplicity. "It was the very first thing I thought of. Mine was such a wretched thing, and wetted with the snow—the very boys hooted at it. Poor old friend!" said she, turning it upon her hand, "you have lost even the shape and pretension to be a bonnet. What must I do with thee? The back of the fire? Sad fate! No, generous companion of my cares and labors, that shall *not* be thy destiny. Useful to the last, thou *light* to-morrow's fire; and that will be the best satisfaction to thy generous manes."

"My bonnet is not so *very* much better," said Myra, rather sulkily.

"Not so *very* much, alas! but better, far better than mine. And, besides, confess, please, my dear, that you had the last bonnet. Two years ago, it's true; but mine had seen three; and then, remember, I am going into grand company again to-morrow, and *must* be decent."

This last remark did not sweeten Myra's temper.

"Oh! I forgot. Of course you'll keep your good company to yourself. I am, indeed, not fit to be seen in it. But you'll want a new gown and a new shawl, my dear, though, indeed, you can always take mine, as you did this morning."

"Now, Myra!" said Lettice, "can you really be so naughty? Nay, you are cross; I see it in your face, though you won't look at me. Now don't be so foolish. Is it not all the same to us both? Are we not in one box? If you wish for the new bonnet, take it, and I'll take yours: I don't care, my dear. You were always used to be more handsomely dressed than me—it must seem quite odd for you not to be so. I only want to be decent when I go about the work, which I shall have to do often, as I told you, because I dare not have two of these expensive handkerchiefs in my possession at once. Dear me, girl! Have we not troubles enough? For goodness' sake don't let us *make* them. There, dear, take the bonnet, and I'll take yours; but I declare, when I look at the two, this is so horribly coarse, yours, old as it is, looks the genteeler to my mind," laughing.

So thought Myra, and kept her own bonnet, Lettice putting upon it the piece of new ribbon she had bought, and after smoothing and rubbing the faded one upon her sister's, trimming with it her own.

The two friends in Green Street sat silently for a short time after the door had closed upon Lettice; and then Catherine began:

"More astonishing things happen in the real world than one ever finds in a book. I am sure if such a reverse of fortune as this had been described to me in a story, I should at once have declared it to be impossible. I could not have believed it credible that, in a society such as ours—full of all sorts of kind, good-natured people, who are daily doing so much for the poor—an amiable girl like this, the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of

England, could be suffered to sink into such abject poverty."

"Ah! my dear Catherine, that shows you have only seen life upon one side, and that its fairest side—as it presents itself in the country. You cannot imagine what a dreadful thing it may prove in large cities. It cannot enter into the head of man to conceive the horrible contrasts of large cities—the dreadful destitution of large cities—the awful solitude of a crowd. In the country, I think, such a thing could hardly have happened, however great the difficulty is of helping those who still preserve the delicacy and dignity with regard to money matters, which distinguishes finer minds—but in London what *can* be done? Like lead in the mighty waters, the moneyless and friendless sink to the bottom. Society in all its countless degrees closes over them; they are lost in its immensity, hidden from every eye, and they perish as an insect might perish; amid the myriads of its kind, unheeded by every other living creature. Ah, my love! if your walks lay where mine have done, your heart would bleed for these destitute women, born to better hopes, and utterly shipwrecked."

"She was such a dear, amiable girl," Catherine went on, "so cheerful, so sweet-tempered—so clever in all that one likes to see people clever about! Her mother was a silly woman."

"So she showed, I fear, by coming to London," said Mrs. Danvers.

"She was so proud of Myra's beauty, and she seemed to think so little of Lettice. She was always prophesying that Myra would make a great match; and so did her aunt, Mrs. Price, who was no wiser than Mrs. Arnold; and they brought up the poor girl to such a conceit of herself—to 'not to do this,' and 'it was beneath her to do that'—and referring every individual thing to her comfort and advancement, till, poor girl, she could hardly escape growing, what she certainly did grow into, a very spoiled, selfish creature. While dear Lettice in her simplicity—that simplicity 'which thinketh no evil'—took it so naturally, that so it was, and so it ought to be; that sometimes one laughed, and sometimes one felt provoked, but one loved her above all things. I never saw such a temper."

"I dare say," said Mrs. Danvers, "that your intention in staying in town to-day was to pay them a visit, which, indeed, we had better do. I had only a glance into their apartment the other day, but it occurred to me that they wanted common necessities. Ignorant as I was of who they were, I was thinking to get them put upon Lady A's coal and blanket list, but that cannot very well be done now. However, presents are always permitted under certain conditions, and the most delicate receive them; and, really this is a case to waive a feeling of that sort in some measure. As you are an old friend and acquaintance, there can be no harm in a few presents before you leave town."

"So I was thinking, ma'am, and I am very impatient to go and see them, and find out what they may be most in want of."

"Well, my dear, I do not see why we should lose time, and I will order a cab to take us, for it is rather too far to walk this terrible day."

They soon arrived at the place I have described, and descending from their cab, walked along in front of this row of lofty houses looking upon the grave-yard, and inhabited by so much human misery. The doors of most of the houses stood open, for they were all let in rooms, and the entrance and staircase were common as the street. What forms of human misery and degradation presented themselves during one short walk which I once took there with a friend employed upon a mission of mercy!

Disease in its most frightful form, panting to inhale a little fresh air. Squalid misery, the result of the gin-shop—decent misery ready to starve. Women shut up in one room with great heartless, brutal, disobedient boys—sickness resting untended upon its solitary bed. Wailing infants—scolding mothers—human nature under its most abject and degraded forms. No thrift, no economy, no attempt at cleanliness and order. Idleness, recklessness, dirt, and wretchedness. Perhaps the very atmosphere of towns; perhaps these close, ill-ventilated rooms; most certainly the poisonous gin-shop, engender a relaxed state of nerves and muscles, which deprives people of the spirits ever to

attempt to make themselves a little decent. Then water is so dear, and dirt so pervading the very atmosphere. Poor things, they give it up; and acquiesce in, and become accustomed to it, and "*avec un malheur sourd dont l'on ne se rend pas compte*," gradually sink and sink into the lowest abyss of habitual degradation.

It is difficult to express the painful sensations which Catherine experienced when she entered the room of the two sisters. To her the dirty paper, the carpetless floor, the miserable bed, the worm-eaten and scanty furniture, the aspect of extreme poverty which pervaded everything, were so shocking, that she could hardly restrain her tears. Not so Mrs. Danvers.

Greater poverty, even she could rarely have seen; but it was too often accompanied with what grieved her more, reckless indifference, and moral degradation. Dirt and disorder, those agents of the powers of darkness, were almost sure to be found where there was extreme want; but here the case was different. As her experienced eye glanced round the room, she could perceive that, poor as was the best, the best *was* made of it; that a cheerful, active spirit—the "How to make the best of it"—that spirit which is like the guardian angel of the poor, had been busy here.

The floor, though bare, was clean; the bed, though so mean, neatly arranged and made; the grate was bright; the chairs were dusted; the poor little plenishing neatly put in order. No dirty garments hanging about the room; all carefully folded and put away they were; though she could not, of course, see that, for there were no half-open drawers of the sloven, admitting dust and dirt, and offending the eye. Lettice herself, with hair neatly braided, her poor worn gown carefully put on, was sitting by the little table, busy at her work, looking the very picture of modest industry. Only one figure offended the nice moral sense of Mrs. Danvers—that of Myra, who sat there with her fine hair hanging round her face, in long, dirty, disheveled ringlets, her feet stretched out and pushed slipshod into her shoes. With her dress half put on, and hanging over her, as the maids say, "no how," she was leaning back in the chair, and sewing very languidly at a very dirty piece of work which she held in her hand.

Both sisters started up when the door opened. Lettice's cheeks flushed with joy, and her eye sparkled with pleasure as she rose to receive her guests, brought forward her only other chair, stirred the fire, and sent the light of a pleasant blaze through the room. Myra colored also, but her first action was to stoop down hastily to pull up the heels of her shoes; she then cast a hurried glance upon her dress, and arranged it a little—occupied as usual with herself, her own appearance was the first thought—and never in her life more disagreeably.

Catherine shook hands heartily with Lettice, saying, "We are soon met again, you see;" and then went up to Myra, and extended her hand to her. The other took it, but was evidently so excessively ashamed of her poverty, and her present appearance, before one who had seen her in better days, that she could not speak, or make any other reply to a kind speech of Catherine's, but by a few unintelligible murmurs.

"I was impatient to come," said Catherine—she and Mrs. Danvers having seated themselves upon the two smaller chairs, while the sisters sat together upon the larger one—"because you know, I must go out of town so very soon, and I wanted to call upon you, and have a little chat and talk of old times—and, really—really"—she hesitated. Dear, good thing, she was so dreadfully afraid of mortifying either of the two in their present fallen state.

"And, really—really," said Mrs. Danvers, smiling, "out with it, my love—really—really, Lettice, Catherine feels as I am sure you would feel if the cases were reversed. She cannot bear the thoughts of her own prosperity, and at the same time think of your misfortunes. I told her I was quite sure you would not be hurt if she did for you, what I was certain you would have done in such a case for her, and would let her make you a little more comfortable before she went. The poor thing's wedding-day will be quite spoiled by thinking about you, if you won't, Lettice."

Lettice stretched out her hand to Catherine by way of answer; and received in return the most

warm and affectionate squeeze. Myra was very glad to be made more comfortable—there was no doubt of that; but half offended, and determined to be as little obliged as possible. And then, Catherine going to be married too. How hard!—every kind of good luck to be heaped upon *her*, and she herself so unfortunate in every way.

But nobody cared for her ungracious looks. Catherine knew her of old, and Mrs. Danvers understood the sort of thing she was in a minute. Her walk had lain too long amid the victims of false views and imperfect moral training, to be surprised at this instance of their effects. The person who surprised her was Lettice.

"Well, then," said Catherine, now quite relieved, and looking round the room, "where shall we begin? What will you have? What do you want most? I shall make you wedding presents, you see, instead of you making them to me. When your turn comes you shall have your revenge."

"Well," Lettice said, "what must be must be, and it's nonsense playing at being proud. I am very much obliged to you, indeed, Catherine, for thinking of us at this time; and if I must tell you what I should be excessively obliged to you for, it is a pair of blankets. Poor Myra can hardly sleep for the cold."

"It's not the cold—it's the wretched, hard, lumpy bed," muttered Myra.

This hint sent Catherine to the bed-side.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried she, piteously, "poor dear things, how could you sleep at all? Do they call this a bed? and such blankets! Poor Myra!" her compassion quite overcoming her dislike. "No wonder. My goodness! my goodness! it's very shocking indeed." And the good young thing could not help crying.

"Blankets, dear girls! and a mattress, and a feather bed, and two pillows. How have you lived through it? And you, poor Myra, used to be made so much of. Poor girl! I am so sorry for you."

And oh, how her heart smote her for all she had said and thought to Myra's disadvantage. And oh! how the generous eyes of Lettice beamed with pleasure as these compassionate words were addressed to her sister. Myra was softened and affected. She could almost forgive Catherine for being so fortunate.

"You are very kind, indeed, Catherine," she said.

Catherine, now quite at her ease, began to examine into their other wants; and without asking many questions, merely by peeping about, and forming her own conclusions, was soon pretty well aware of what was the most urgent necessity. She was now quite upon the fidget to be gone, that she might order and send in the things; and ten of the twenty pounds given her for wedding-lace was spent before she and Mrs. Danvers reached home; that lady laughing, and lamenting over the wedding-gown, which would certainly not be flounced with Honiton, as Catherine's good god-mother had intended, and looking so pleased, contented, and happy, that it did Catherine's heart good to see her.

CHAPTER IV.

"The swain in barren deserts with surprise
Sees lilies spring, and sudden verdure rise:
And starts amid the thirsty wilds to hear
New falls of water murmur in his ear."—POPE.

In the evening Mrs. Danvers seemed rather tired, and the two sat over the fire a long time, without a single word being uttered; but, at last, when tea was finished, and they had both taken their work, Catherine, who had been in profound meditation all this time, began:

"My dear Mrs. Danvers, are you rested? I have a great deal to talk to you about, if you will let me."

"I must be very much tired, indeed, Catherine, when I do not like to hear *you* talk," was the kind reply.

Mrs. Danvers reposed very comfortably in her arm-chair, with her feet upon a footstool before the cheerful blazing fire; and now Catherine drew her chair closer, rested her feet upon the fender, and seemed to prepare herself for a regular confidential talk with her beloved old friend.

"My dear Mrs. Danvers, you are such a friend,

both of my dear mother's and mine, that I think I may, without scruple, open my whole heart to you upon a matter in which more than myself are concerned. If you think me wrong, stop me," said she, laying her hand affectionately upon that of her friend, and fixing those honest, earnest eyes of hers upon her face.

Mrs. Danvers pressed her hand, and said:

"My love, whatever you confide to me you know is sacred; and if I can be of any assistance to you, dear girl, I think you need not scruple opening your mind; for you know I am a sort of general mother-confessor to all my acquaintance, and am as secret as such a profession demands."

Catherine lifted up the hand; she held it, pressed it, and continued to hold it; then she looked at the fire a little while, and at last spoke.

"Did you never in your walk in life observe one evil under the sun, which appears to me to be a most crying one in many families, the undue influence exercised by, and the power allowed to servants?"

"Yes, my dear, there are few of the minor evils—if minor it can be called—that I have thought productive of more daily discomforts than that. At times the evils assume a much greater magnitude, and are very serious indeed. Alienated hearts—divided families—property to a large amount unjustly and unrighteously diverted from its natural channel—and misery, not to be told, about old age and a dying bed."

Catherine slightly shuddered, and said:

"I have not had an opportunity of seeing much of the world, you know; what you say is rather what I feared it might be, than what I have actually observed; but I have had a sort of divination of what might in future arise. It is inexplicable to me the power a servant may gain, and the tyrannical way in which she will dare to exercise it. The unaccountable way in which those who have every title to command, may be brought to obey, is scarcely to be believed, and to be inexplicable."

"Fear and indolence, my dear. Weak spirits and a weak body, upon the one side; on the other, that species of force which want of feeling, want of delicacy, want of a nice conscience, want even of an enlarged understanding—which rough habits and coarse perceptions bestow. Believe me, dear girl, almost as much power is obtained in this foolish world by the absence of certain qualities as by the possession of others. Silly people think it so nice and easy to govern, and so hard to obey. It requires many higher qualities, and much more rule over the spirit to command obedience than to pay it."

"Yes, no doubt, one does not think enough of that. Jeremy Taylor, in his fine prayers, has one for a new-married wife just about to enter a family; he teaches her to pray for 'a right judgment in all things; not to be annoyed at trifles; nor discomposed by contrariety of accidents; a spirit 'to overcome all my infirmities, and comply with and bear with the infirmities of others; giving offence to none, but doing good to all I can;' but I think he should have added a petition for strength to rule and guide that portion of the household which falls under her immediate care, with a firm and righteous hand, not yielding feebly to the undue encroachment of others, not suffering, through indolence or a mistaken love of peace, evil habits to creep over those who look up to us and depend upon us, to their own infinite injury as well as to our own. Ah! that is the part of a woman's duty hardest to fulfill; and I almost tremble," said the young bride elect, "when I think how heavy the responsibility; and how hard I shall find it to acquit myself as I desire."

"In this as in other things," answered Mrs. Danvers, affectionately passing her hand over her young favorite's smooth and shining hair, "I have ever observed there is but one portion of real strength; one force alone by which we can move mountains. But in that strength we assuredly are able to move mountains. Was this all that you had to say, my dear?"

"Oh, no—but—it is so disagreeable—yet I think. Did you ever notice how things went on at home, my dear friend?"

"Yes—a little I have. One cannot help, you know, if one stays long in a house, seeing the re-

lation in which the different members of a family stand to each other."

"I thought you must have done so; that makes it easier for me—well, then, *that* was one great reason which made me so unwilling to leave mamma."

"I understand."

"There is a vast deal of that sort of tyranny exercised in our family already. Ever since I have grown up I have done all in my power to check it, by encouraging my poor, dear mamma, to exert a little spirit; but she is so gentle, so soft, so indulgent, and so affectionate—for even *that* comes in her way. She gets attached to everything around her. She cannot bear new faces, she says, and I think the servants know, and take advantage of. They venture to do as they like, because they think it will be too painful an exertion for her to change them."

"Yes, my dear, that is exactly as things go on; not in your family alone, but in numbers that I could name if I chose. It is a very serious evil. It amounts to a sin in many households. The waste, the almost vicious luxury, the idleness that is allowed! The positive loss of what might be so much better bestowed upon those who really want it, to the positive injury of those who enjoy it! The demoralizing effect of pampered habits—the sins which are committed through the temptation of having nothing to do, will make, I fear, a dark catalogue against the masters and mistresses of families; who, because they have money in abundance, and hate trouble, allow all this misrule, and its attendant ill consequences upon their dependents. Neglecting 'to rule with diligence,' as the Apostle commands us, and satisfied, provided they themselves escape suffering from the ill consequences, except as far as an overflowing plentiful purse is concerned. Few people seem to reflect upon the mischief they may be doing to these their half-educated fellow creatures by such negligence."

Catherine looked very grave, almost sorrowful, at this speech. She said:

"Poor mamma—but she *cannot* help it—indeed she cannot. She is all love, and is gentleness itself. The blessed one 'who thinketh no evil.' How can that Randall find the heart to tease her! as I am sure she does—though mamma never complains. And then, I am afraid, indeed, I feel certain, when I am gone the evil will very greatly increase. You, perhaps, have observed," added she, lowering her voice, "that poor papa makes it particularly difficult in our family—doubly difficult. His old wounds, his injured arm, his age and infirmities, make all sorts of little comforts indispensable to him. He suffers so much bodily, and he suffers, too, so much from little inconveniences, that he cannot bear to have anything done for him in an unaccustomed way. Randall and Williams have lived with us ever since I was five years old—when poor papa came back from Waterloo almost cut to pieces. And he is so fond of them he will not hear a complaint against them—not even from mamma. Oh! it is not her fault—poor, dear mamma!"

"No, my love, such a dreadful sufferer as the poor general too often is, makes things very difficult at times. I understand all that quite well; but we are still only on the preamble of your discourse, my Catherine; something more than vain lamentations is to come of it, I feel sure."

"Yes, indeed. Dear generous mamma! She would not hear of my staying with her and giving up Edgar; nor would she listen to what he was noble enough to propose, that he should abandon his profession and come and live at the Hazels, rather than that I should feel I was tampering with my duty, for his sake, dear fellow!"

And the tears stood in Catherine's eyes.

"Nothing I could say would make her listen to it. I could hardly be sorry for Edgar's sake. I knew what a sacrifice it would be upon his part—more than a woman ought to accept from a lover, I think—a man in his dotage, as one may say. Don't you think so, too, ma'am?"

"Yes, my dear, indeed I do. Well, go on."

"I have been so perplexed, so unhappy, so undecided what to do—so sorry to leave this dear, generous mother to the mercy of those servants of hers—whose influence, when she is alone, and with nobody to hearten her up a little, will be so terribly

upon the increase—that I have not known what to do. But to-day, while I was dressing for dinner, a sudden, blessed thought came into my mind—really, just like a flash of light that seemed to put everything clear at once—and it is about that I want to consult you, if you will let me. That dear Lettice Arnold! I knew her from a child. You cannot think what a creature she is. So sensible, so cheerful, so sweet-tempered, so self-sacrificing, yet so clever, and firm, and steady, when necessary. Mamma wants a daughter, and papa wants a reader and backgammon player. Lettice Arnold is the very thing."

Mrs. Danvers made no answer.

"Don't you think so? Are you not sure? Don't you see it?" asked poor Catherine, anxiously.

"Alas! my dear, there is one thing I can scarcely ever persuade myself to do; and that is—advise any one to undertake the part of humble friend."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! I know it's a terrible part in general; and I can't think why."

"Because neither party in general understands the nature of the relation, nor the exchange of duties it implies. For want of proper attention to this, the post of governess is often rendered so unsatisfactory to one side, and so very uncomfortable to the other, but in that case at least *something* is defined. In the part of the humble friend there is really nothing—everything depends upon the equity and good-nature of the first party, and the candor and good-will of the second. Equity not to exact too much—good-nature to consult the comfort and happiness of the dependent. On that dependent's side, candor in judging of what is exacted; and good-will cheerfully to do the best in her power to be amiable and agreeable."

"I am not afraid of mamma. She will never be exacting *much*. She will study the happiness of all who depend upon her; she only does it almost too much, I sometimes think, to the sacrifice of her own comfort, and to the spoiling of them—and though papa is sometimes so suffering that he can't help being a little impatient, yet he is a perfect gentleman, you know. As for Lettice Arnold, if ever there was a person who knew 'how to make the best of it,' and sup cheerfully upon fried onions when she had lost her piece of roast kid, it is she. Besides, she is so uniformly good-natured, that it is quite a pleasure to her to oblige. The only danger between dearest mamma and Lettice will be—of their quarreling which shall give up most to the other. But, joking apart, she is a vast deal more than I have said—she is a remarkably clever, spirited girl, and shows it when she is called upon. You cannot think how discreet, how patient, yet how firm, she can be. Her parents, poor people, were very difficult to live with, and were always running wrong. If it had not been for Lettice, affairs would have got into dreadful confusion. There is that in her so *right*, such an inherent downright sense of propriety and justice—somehow or other I am confident she will not let Randall tyrannize over mamma when I am gone."

"Really," said Mrs. Danvers, "what you say seems very reasonable. There are exceptions to every rule. It certainly is one of mine to have as little as possible to do in recommending young women to the situation of humble friends. Yet in some cases I have seen all the comfort you anticipate arise to both parties from such a connection; and I own I never saw a fairer chance presented than the present; provided Randall is not too strong for you all; which may be feared."

"Well, then, you do not disavise me to talk to mamma about it, and I will write to you as soon as I possibly can; and you will be kind enough to negotiate with Lettice, if you approve of the terms. As for Randall she shall *not* be too hard for me. Now is my hour; I am in the ascendant, and I will win this battle or perish; that is, I will tell mamma that I *won't* be married upon any other terms; and to have 'Miss' married is quite as great a matter of pride to Mrs. Randall as to that dearest of mothers."

The contest with Mrs. Randall was as fierce as Catherine, in her worst anticipations, could have expected. She set herself most doggedly against the plan. It, indeed, militated against all her schemes. She had intended to have everyth-

far more than ever her own way when "Miss Catherine was gone;" and though she had no doubt but that she should "keep the creature in her place," and teach her "there was only one mistress here" (which phrase usually means the maid, though it implies the lady), yet she had a sort of misgiving about it. There would be one at her (Mrs. Melwyn's) ear as well as herself, and at, possibly her master's too, which was of still more importance. And then "those sort of people are so artful and cantankerous. Oh! she'd seen enough of them in her day! Poor servants couldn't have a moment's peace with a creature like that in the house, spying about and telling everything in the parlor. One can't take a walk, or see a poor friend, or have a bit of comfort, but all goes up there. Well, those may put up with it who like. Here's one as won't, and that's me myself; and so I shall make bold to tell Miss Catherine. General and Mrs. Melwyn must choose between me and the new-comer."

Poor Catherine! Mrs. Melwyn cried, and said her daughter was very right: but she was sure Randall never would bear it. And the general, with whom Randall had daily opportunity for private converse while she bound up his shattered arm, and dressed the old wound, which was perpetually breaking out afresh, and discharging splinters of bone, easily talked her master into the most decided dislike to the scheme.

But Catherine stood firm. She had the support of her own heart and judgement; and the greater the difficulty, the more strongly she felt the necessity of the measure. Edgar backed her, too, with all his might. He could hardly keep down his vexation at this weakness on one side, and indignation at the attempted tyranny on the other, and he said everything he could think of to encourage Catherine to persevere.

She talked the matter well over with her father. The general was the most testy, cross, and unreasonable of old men; always out of humor, because always suffering, and always jealous of everybody's influence and authority, because he was now too weak and helpless to rule his family with a rod of iron, such as he, the greatest of martinets, had wielded in better days in his regiment and in his household alike. He suffered himself to be governed by Randall, and by nobody else; because in yielding to Randall, there was a sort of consciousness of the exercise of free will. He ought to be influenced by his gentle wife, and clever, sensible daughter; but there was no reason on earth, but because he chose to do it, that he should mind what Randall said.

"I hate the whole pack of them! I know well enough what sort of a creature you'll bring among us, Catherine. A whining, methodistical old maid, with a face like a hatchet, and a figure as if it had been pressed between two boards, dressed in a flimsy cheap silk, of a dingy brown color, with a cap like a grenadier's. Your mother and she will be sitting moistening their eyes all day long over the sins of mankind; and, I'll be bound, my own sins won't be forgotten among them. Oh! I know the pious creatures of old. Nothing they hate like a poor old veteran, with a naughty word or two in his mouth now and then. Never talk to me Catherine; I can't abide such cattle."

"Dearest papa, what a picture you do draw! just to frighten yourself. Why, Lettice Arnold is only about nineteen, I believe; and though she's not particularly pretty, she's the pleasantest-looking creature you ever saw. And as for bemoaning herself over her neighbors' sins, I'll be bound she's not half such a Methodist as Randall."

"Randall is a very pious, good woman, I'd have you to know, Miss Catherine."

"I'm sure I hope she is, papa; but you must own she makes a great fuss about it. And I believe, the habit she has of whispering and turning up the whites of her eyes, when she hears of a neighbor's peccadillos, is one thing which sets you so against the righteous, dearest papa; now you know it is."

"You're a saucy baggage. How old is this thing you're trying to put upon us, did you say?"

"Why, about nineteen, or, perhaps, twenty. And then, who's to read to you, papa, when I am gone, and play backgammon? You know mamma must not read, on account of her chest, and she plays so badly, you say, at backgammon; and

it's so dull, husband and wife playing you know." (Poor Mrs. Melwyn dreaded, of all things, backgammon; she invariably got ridiculed if she played ill, and put her husband into a passion if she beat him. Catherine had long taken this business upon herself.)

"Does she play backgammon tolerably? and can she read without drawling or galloping?"

"Just at your own pace, papa, whatever that may be. Besides, you can only try her; she's easily sent away if you and mamma don't like her. And then think, she is a poor clergyman's daughter; and it would be quite a kind action."

"A poor parson's! It would have been more to the purpose if you had said a poor officer's. I pay tithes enough to the black-coated gentlemen, without being bothered with their children; and who ever pays tithes to us, I wonder? I don't see what right parsons have to marry at all; and then, forsooth, come and ask other people to take care of their brats!"

"Ah! but she's not to be taken care of for nothing; only think what a comfort she'll be."

"To your mamma, perhaps, but not to me. And she's always the first person to be considered in this house, I know very well; and I know very well who it is that dresses the poor old soldier's wounds, and studies his comforts—and he'll study hers; and I won't have her vexed to please any of you."

"But why should she be vexed? It's nothing to her. She's not to live with Lettice. And I must say, if Randall sets herself against this measure, she behaves in a very unreasonable and unworthy manner, in my opinion."

"Hoity toity! To be sure; and who's behaving in an unreasonable and unworthy manner now, I wonder, abusing her behind her back, a worthy attached creature, whose soul object it is to study the welfare of us all? She's told me so a thousand times."

"I dare say. Well, now, papa, listen to me. I'm going away from you for good—your little Catherine. Just for once grant me this as a favor. Only try Lettice. I'm sure you'll like her; and if, after she's been here for a quarter of a year, you don't wish to keep her, why part with her, and I'll promise not to say a word about it. Randall has her good qualities, I suppose, like the rest of the world; but Randall must be taught to keep her place, and that's not in this drawing-room. And it's here you want Lettice not in your dressing-room. Randall shall have it all her own way there, and that ought to content her. And besides, papa, do you know, I can't marry Edgar till you have consented, because I cannot leave mamma and you with nobody to keep you company."

"Edgar and you be d—n! Well, do as you like. The sooner you're out of the house the better. I shan't have my own way till you're gone. You're a sad coaxing baggage, but you have a pretty face of your own, Miss Catherine."

If the debate upon the subject ran high at the Hazles, so did it in the little humble apartment which the two sisters occupied.

"A humble friend! No," cried Myra, "that I would never, never be; rather die of hunger first."

"Dying of hunger is a very horrible thing," said Lettice, quietly, "and much more easily said than done. We have not, God be thanked for it, ever been quite so badly off as that; but I have stood near enough to the dreadful gulf to look down, and to sound its depth and its darkness. I am very thankful, deeply thankful, for this offer, which I should gladly accept, only what is to become of you?"

"Oh! never mind me. It's the fashion now, I see, for everybody to think of you, and nobody to think of me. I'm not worth caring for, now those who cared for me are gone. Oh! pray, if you like to be a domestic slave yourself, let me be no hindrance."

"A domestic slave! why should I be a domestic slave? I see no slavery in the case."

"I call it slavery, whatever you may do, to have nothing to do all day but play toad-eater and flatterer to a good-for-nothing old woman; to bear all her ill-humors, and be the butt for all her caprices. That's what humble friends are expected to do, I believe; what else are they hired for?"

"I should neither toady nor flatter, I hope."

said Lettice; and as for bearing people's ill-humors, and being now and then the sport of their caprices, why that, as you say, is very disagreeable, yet, perhaps, it is what we must rather expect. But Mrs. Melwyn, I have always heard, is the gentlest of human beings. And if she is like Catherine, she must be free from caprice, and nobody could help quite loving her."

"Stuff—love! love! A humble friend love her, a humble friend; for I suppose one must not venture to call one's mistress a tyrant. Oh, no, a friend! a dear friend!" in a taunting ironical voice.

"Whomever it might be my fate to live with, I should try to love; for I believe if one tries to love people, one soon finds something lovable about them, and Mrs. Melwyn, I feel sure, I should soon love very much."

"So like you! ready to love anything and everything. I verily believe if there was nothing else to love but the little chimney-sweeper boy, you'd fall to loving him, rather than love nobody."

"I'm sure that's true enough," said Lettice, laughing; "I have more than once felt very much inclined to love the little boy who carries the soot-bag for the man who sweeps these chimneys—such a saucy-looking, little sooty rogue."

"As if a person's love could be worth having," continued the sister, "who is so ready to love anybody."

"No, that I deny. Some few people I do find it hard to love."

"Me for one."

"Oh, Myra!"

"Well, I beg your pardon. You're very kind to me. But I'll tell you who it will be impossible for you to love—if such a thing can be; that's that testy, cross, old general."

"I don't suppose I shall have much to do with the old general, if I go."

"If you go. Oh, you're sure to go. You're so sanguine; every new prospect is so promising. But pardon me, you seem quite to have forgotten that reading to the old general, and playing backgammon with him, are among your specified employments."

"Well, I don't see much harm in it if they are. A man can't be very cross with one when one's reading to him—and as for the backgammon, I mean to lose every game, if that will please him."

"Oh, a man can't be cross with a reader? I wish you knew as much of the world as I do, and had heard people read. I'm sure I've been put into such a worry by people's way of reading, that I could have pinched them. Why, nothing on earth puts one in such a fidget. Really, Lettice, your simplicity would shame a child of five years old."

"Well, I shall do my best, and besides I shall take care to set my chair so far off that I can't get pinched, at least; and as for a poor, ailing, suffering old man being a little impatient and cross, why one can't expect to get fifty pounds a year for just doing nothing. I do suppose it is expected that I should bear a few of these things in place of Mrs. Melwyn; and I don't see why I should not."

"Oh, dear! Well, my love, you're quite made for the place, I see; you always had something of the spaniel in you, or the walnut tree or any of those things which are the better for being ill-used. It was quite a proverb with our poor mother, 'a worm will turn, but not Lettice.'"

Lettice felt very much inclined to turn now. But the mention of her mother—that mother whose mismanagement and foolish indulgence had contributed so much to poor Myra's faults—faults for which she now paid so heavy a penalty—silenced the generous girl, and she made no answer.

No answer, let it proceed from never so good a motive, makes cross people often more cross; though perhaps upon the whole it is the best plan.

So Myra in a still more querulous voice went on:

"This room will be rather dismal all by one's self, and I don't know how I'm to go about, up and down, fetch and carry, and work as you are able to do. I was never used to it. It comes very hard upon me." And she began to cry.

"Poor Myra! dear Myra! don't cry; I never intended to leave you. Though I talked as if I did,

it was only in the way of argument, because I thought more might be said for the kind of life than you thought; and I felt sure if people were tolerably kind and candid, I could get along very well and make myself quite comfortable. Dear me! after such hardships as we have gone through, a little would do that. But do you think, poor dear girl, I could have a moment's peace, and know you were here alone? No, no."

And so when she went in the evening to carry her answer to Mrs. Danvers, who had conveyed to her Catherine's proposal, Lettice said, "that she should have liked exceedingly to accept Catherine's offer, and was sure she should have been very happy herself, and would have done everything in her power to make Mrs. Melwyn happy, but that it was impossible to leave her sister."

If that is your only difficulty, my dear, don't make yourself uneasy about that. I have found a place for your sister which I think she will like very well. It is with Mrs. Fisher, the great milliner in Dover street, where she will be taken care of, and may be very comfortable. Mrs. Fisher is a most excellent person, and very anxious, not only about the health and comfort of those she employs, but about their good behavior and their security from evil temptation. Such a beautiful girl as your sister is, lives in perpetual danger, exposed as she is without protection in this great town.

"But Myra has such an abhorrence of servitude, as she calls it—such an independent high spirit—I fear she will never like it."

"It will be very good for her, whether she likes it or not. Indeed, my dear, to speak sincerely, the placing your sister out of danger in the house of Mrs. Fisher ought to be a decisive reason with you for accepting Catherine's proposal—even did you dislike it much more than you seem to do."

"Oh! to tell the truth, I should like the plan very much indeed—much more than I have wished to say, on account of Myra; but she never, never will submit to be ruled, I fear, and make herself happy, where, of course, she must obey orders and follow regulations, whether she likes them or not. Unfortunately, poor dear, she has been so little accustomed to be contradicted."

"Well, then, it is high time she should begin; for contradicted, sooner or later, we all of us are certain to be. Seriously, again, my dear, good Lettice—I must call you Lettice—your innocence of heart prevents you from knowing what snares surround a beautiful young woman like your sister. I like you best, I own; but I have thought much more of her fate than yours, upon that account. Such a situation as is offered to you she evidently is quite unfit to fill; but I went—the very day Catherine and I came to your lodgings and saw you both—to my good friend, Mrs. Fisher, and, with great difficulty have persuaded her at last to take your sister. She disliked the idea very much; but she's an excellent woman; and when I represented to her the peculiar circumstances of the case, she promised she would consider the matter. She took a week to consider of it—for she is a very cautious person, is Mrs. Fisher; and some people call her very cold and severe. However, she has decided in our favor, as I expected she would. Her compassion always gets the better of her prudence, when the two are at issue. And so you would not dislike to go to Mrs. Melwyn's?"

"How could I? Why, after what we have suffered, it must be like going into Paradise."

"Nay, nay—a little too fast. No dependent situation is ever exactly a Paradise. I should be sorry you saw things in a false light, and should be disappointed."

"Oh, no, no, I do not wish to do that—I don't think—thank you for the great kindness and interests you are so kind to show by this last remark, but I think I never in my life enjoyed one day of unmixed happiness since I was quite a little child; and I have got so entirely into the habit of thinking that everything in the world goes so—that when I say Paradise, or quite happy, or so on, it is always in a certain sense—a comparative sense."

"I am glad to see you so reasonable, that is one sure way to be happy; but you will find your crosses at the Hazels. The general is not very

sweet-tempered; and even dear mild Mrs. Melwyn is not perfect."

"Why, madam, what am I to expect? If I can not bear a few disagreeable things, what do I go there for? Not to be fed, and housed, and paid at other people's expense, just that I may please my own humors all the time. That *would* be rather an unfair bargain, I think. No; I own there are some things I could not and would not bear for any consideration; but there are a great many others that I can, and I shall, and I will—and do my best, too, to make happy, and be happy; and, in short, I don't feel the least afraid."

"No more you need, you right-spirited creature," said Mrs. Danvers, cordially.

Many were the difficulties, endless the objections raised by Myra against the proposed plan of going to Mrs. Fisher. Such people's objections and difficulties are indeed endless. In their weakness and their selfishness, they like to be objects of pity—they take a comfort in bothering and wearying people with their interminable complaints. Theirs is not the sacred outbreak of the overloaded heart, casting itself upon another heart for support and consolation under suffering that is too strong and too bitter to be endured alone. Sacred call for sympathy and consolation, and rarely made in vain! It is the wearying and futile attempt to cast the burden of sorrowing and suffering upon others, instead of seeking their assistance in enduring it one's self. Vain and useless endeavor, and which often bears hard upon the sympathy even of the kindest and truest hearts!

Ineffectually did Lettice endeavor to represent matters under a cheerful aspect. Nothing was of any avail. Myra would persist in lamenting, and grieving, and tormenting herself and her sister; bemoaning the cruel fate of both—would persist in recapitulating every objection which could be made to the plan, and every evil consequence which could possibly ensue. Not that she had the slightest intention in the world of refusing her share in it, if she would have suffered herself to say so. She rather liked the idea of going to that fashionable *modiste*, Mrs. Fisher; she had the "*ame de dentelle*" with which Napoleon reproached poor Josephine. There was something positively delightful to her imagination in the idea of dwelling among rich silks, Brussels laces, ribbons and feathers; it was to her what woods, and birds, and trees were to her sister. She fancied herself elegantly dressed, walking about a show-room, filled with all sorts of beautiful things; herself, perhaps the most beautiful thing in it, and the object of a sort of flattering interest, through the melancholy cloud "upon her fine features." Nay, her romantic imagination traveled still farther—gentlemen sometimes come up with ladies to show-rooms—who could tell? Love at first sight was not altogether a dream. Such things *had* happened. Myra had read plenty of old, rubbishy novels when she was a girl.

Such were the comfortable thoughts she kept to herself; but it was, as I said, one endless complaining externally.

Catherine insisted upon being allowed to advance the money for the necessary clothes, which, to satisfy the delicacy of the one and the pride of the other, she agreed should be repaid by installments as their salaries became due. The sale of their few possessions put a sovereign or so into the pocket of each, and thus the sisters parted; the lovely Myra to Mrs. Fisher's, and Lettice, by railway, to the Hazels.

CHAPTER V.

Since trifles make the sum of human things . . .
Oh! let the ungentle spirit learn from thence,
A small unkindness is a great offence:
Large favors to bestow we strive in vain,
But all may shun the guilt of giving pain.
HANNAH MOORE.

If Lettice had made her reflections, and had started upon her new undertaking with a heart yearning with the desire to perform its duties well, Mrs. Melwyn had not been without undergoing a somewhat similar process upon her side, and this was her course of thought.

She had at first felt the utmost dislike to the plan.

She had, in the course of her life, seen so much discomfort, and dissatisfaction arise upon both

sides from this sort of connection, that she had taken up quite a prejudice against anything of the sort.

"It was a very great pity," she often said to herself, "that so it should be, but the case was universal. If it could be otherwise, what desirable connections might be formed in a world such as the present! Such numbers of women of all ages, and all degrees of mental qualifications, find themselves suddenly without resource, through the accident of early death in the case of the professions, or of disaster in commercial life; and so many others, through disease or advanced age, or the still more cruel stroke of death, find themselves stranded, lonely and deserted, and languishing for a residence friend. What comfortable, beneficial unions might be brought about in such cases, one should think; and yet why did they never or seldom turn out well?"

"Faults there must be. Where did they lie? On both sides," answered her understanding. "Not surely alone upon the side of the new-comer—the paid one, consequently the obliged one, consequently the only one of the parties who had duties that she was pledged to perform, and which, it is true, she too often very imperfectly performed—but also upon the other. She, it is true, is pledged to nothing but the providing meat, lodging, and salary; but that will not dispense her from obligations as a Christian, and as a member of the universal sisterhood, which are not quite so easily discharged."

"It must double the difficulty to the new-comer," thought Mrs. Melwyn, "the being treated so carelessly as she too often is. How hard it must be to perform duties such as hers, if they are not performed in love! and how impossible it must be to love in such a case—unless we meet with love. Even to be treated with consideration and kindness will not suffice upon the one side, nor the most scrupulous endeavor to discharge duty upon the other—people must try to *love*."

"How soothing to a poor, deserted orphan to be taken to the heart! How sweet to forlorn old age to find a fresh object of affection! Ah, but then these sort of people seem often so disagreeable, do one's best, one cannot love or like them. But why do they seem so disagreeable? Partly because people will overlook nothing—have no mutual indulgence in relations which require so much. If one's child has little ways one does not quite like, who thinks of hating her for it? If one's mother is a little provoking and tedious under the oppressive weight of years or sickness, who thinks of making a great hardship of it? But if the poor, humble friend is only a little awkward or ungainly, she is odious; and if the poor, deserted mother, or widow, wife, or aged suffering creature is a little irritable or tedious, she is *such* a tyrant!"

"Oh, how I wish!—"

"Well, Catherine is a sensible, well-judging creature, and she assures me this Miss Arnold is a remarkably sweet-tempered, affectionate, modest, judicious girl. Why should I not try to make such a being love me? Why should we not be very happy together? There is Randall, to be sure, sets herself extremely against it; but, as Catherine says, 'Is Randall to be mistress in this family, or am I?' It is come quite to that point. And then it will be a great thing to have somebody between me and Randall. She will not be so necessary to me then, whatever she may be to the general; and when she makes herself so disagreeable, if this young lady is as comfortable to me as Catherine says she will be, I really shall not so much care."

"Then," continuing her meditations, which, though I put down in black and white, were *thought*, not spoken, "then Catherine says she is so greatly to be pitied, and is so exemplary; and she said, in her darling, coaxing way, 'Dear mamma, it will give you so much pleasure to make the poor thing amends for all her hardships, and if poor papa is a little cross at times, it will be quite an interest to you to contrive to make up for it. She will be quite a daughter to you, and in one respect you will have more pleasure in making her happy than even your own loving daughter, because one is dear from our natural affections, and the other will be so from generous beneficence; and though natural affection is such a sweet, precious, inestimable thing, generous beneficence is yet nobler, and brings us still nearer to God.'"

"If I could make her love me—and with such an affectionate temper why should I not? She wants a parent, I want a child. If I study her happiness disinterestedly, kindly, truly, she cannot help loving me; but I will try to study *her* good, *her* well-being; and I will let the love for me come or not as it may, and God will help me. He always does help me, when I have the courage to dare to forget myself, and leave the issue of things to His Providence."

Such were the dispositions upon both sides with which the two met. But the best resolutions win no battle. They are part, and a very serious part of every undertaking, but they are far from being all. We are so imperfect ourselves, and we have to do with such imperfect beings, that evils and difficulties, unexpected, are sure to arise in our communication with others, even when both sides meet with the very best intentions; therefore, whoever intends to carry out such good intentions, and make a right piece of work of it, must calculate upon these things, just as the mechanic is obliged to make a large allowance for unavoidable obstructions in carrying out any of his theories into action and reality—into useful, everyday working order.

In due time a fly from the railway—one of those dirty, hired carriages which are the disgrace of England—deposited Miss Arnold and her luggage at the door of General Melwyn's handsome mansion of the Hazels, and in all due form and order she was introduced into the dining-room. It was between six and seven o'clock in the evening when she entered the very handsomely-furnished apartment, where over a half-and-half sort of fire—it having been rather a warm February day—sat the general and his lady.

Lettice was tired, heated and red with the jumbling of the railway, the bother at the station, and the knocking about in the very uneasy carriage in which she had come up; and she felt in that disagreeable sort of journey disorder of toilet, which makes people feel and look so awkward. But she put the best face upon the matter, and entering, made a very respectful courtesy to Mrs. Melwyn, who met her, holding out her hand; and with her face and her appearance Lettice felt charmed in a moment. Mrs. Melwyn, who did not want penetration, saw that in Lettice, spite of present disadvantages, which she was sure she should like very much. Not so the general. He was a perfect fool of the eye, as military men are too apt to be. Whatever was awkward or ill-dressed, was perfectly abhorrent to him; and he took a dislike to "the creature" the moment he cast his eyes upon her.

It seemed but an unpromising beginning.

The heart of poor Lettice sunk within her in a way she was little accustomed to, as the general, in a very pettish mood, stirred the fire, and said, "When *are* we to have dinner, Mrs. Melwyn? What *are* we waiting for? Will you never teach that cook of yours to be punctual?"

"It is not her fault, indeed," was the answer, in a low, timid voice; "I ventured to order dinner to be put off half an hour, to suit the railway time."

The general was too well bred to utter what he very plainly looked—that to have been thus kept waiting for Miss Arnold he thought a very unwarrantable proceeding indeed.

He stirred up the fire with additional vigor—made it blaze fiercely—then complained of these abominable coals, which burned like touchwood, and had no heat in them, and wondered whether Mrs. Melwyn would ever have the energy to order sea-borne coal, as he had desired; and then, casting a most ungracious look at the new-comer, who stood during this scene, feeling shocked and uncomfortable to a degree, he asked Mrs. Melwyn "how long she intended to keep the young lady standing there before she dressed for dinner?" and suggested that the housemaid should be sent for, to show her to her room.

"I will take that office upon myself," said Mrs. Melwyn. "Come, Miss Arnold, will you follow me?" And lighting a candle, for it was now dark, she proceeded toward the door.

"For heaven's sake, don't be long," said her husband, in an irritable tone; it's striking six and three-quarters. Is dinner to be upon the table at seven o'clock, or is it not?"

"Punctually."

"Then, Miss—Miss—I beg your pardon—and Mrs. Melwyn, I *hope* you will be ready to take your usual place at table."

They heard no more; for Mrs. Melwyn closed the door, with the air of one escaping—and, looking uncomfortable and half-frightened, led the way up stairs.

It was a pretty, cheerful little room, of which she opened the door; and a pleasant fire was blazing in the grate. The bed was of white dimity, trimmed with a border of colored chintz, as were the window-curtains; the carpet quite new, and uncommonly pretty; chairs, dressing-table, writing-table, all very neat and elegant; and the tables comfortably covered each with its proper appendages.

It was quite a pretty little den.

Mrs. Melwyn had taken much pleasure in the fitting up of this small room, which was next to her own dressing-room. She had fancied herself going to receive into it a second Catherine, and though the very moderate amount of money of which she had the power of disposing as she pleased, and the noisy remonstrances and objections of Randall, had prevented her indulging in many petty fancies which would have amused and occupied her pleasantly since the dismal day of Catherine's wedding, still she had persisted, contrary to her wont, in having in some degree her own way. So, in spite of all Randall could do, she had discarded the ugly old things—which the lady's maid, excessively jealous of this new-comer, declared were more than too good for such as her—and had substituted this cheerful simplicity; and the air of freshness and newness cast over everything rendered it particularly pleasing.

"What a beautiful little room!" Lettice could not help exclaiming, looking excessively delighted. She liked pretty things and elegant little comforts as well as anybody, did Lettice, though they seldom fell to her share, because she was always giving them up to other people.

"Do you like it, my dear?" said Mrs. Melwyn, in what Lettice thought the sweetest, softest voice she had ever heard. "I have taken great pleasure in getting it ready for you; I shall be glad, indeed, if you can make yourself happy in it."

"Happy! Who could help being happy in such a paradise?" "And with such a sweet, gentle, charming person as Mrs. Melwyn," mentally added Lettice. "What matters it how cross the poor old general is," thought she.

"But, my dear, I don't see your trunks. Will you ring the bell for them? The general must not be kept waiting for his dinner, and he can not endure those who sit down at his table, either to be too late, or not to be in an evening dress. Military men, you know, are so used to this sort of precision, that they expect it from all around them. You will remember another day, my dear, and"—then the under-housemaid opened the door. "Tell them to bring up Miss Arnold's trunks directly."

Them.

She did not at that moment exactly know which was the proper servant whose office it ought to be to carry Miss Arnold's trunks. Miss Arnold was an anomaly. There was no precedent. Not a servant in this family would stir without a precedent. The trunk was probably too heavy for the under-housemaid to carry up—that under-housemaid, one of the fags of an establishment like this, kept merely to do what the upper-servants are too fine to do. In households like the one before us, you must have two in every department; there is a chance, then, if you want anything done, you may get it done. The under-servant is always, as I said, a sort of fag or slave in the eyes of the upper ones. They will *allow* her to make herself useful, though it should not be exactly her place. Mrs. Melwyn had provided for the attendance upon Miss Arnold by having recourse to this said under-housemaid, and adding a couple of sovereigns to her wages unknown to Randall, but she had forgotten the carrying up of her trunk. Had it been Catherine, this would have been done as a matter of course by the two footmen, and she had a sort of faint hope they would do it of course now. But, she did not like to ask such a thing, so she said "them," hoping somebody would answer to it some way or other, but—

"Who?" asked Bridget, bringing the matter to a point.

"Why, I am sure I don't exactly know. Who is there below? I suppose you could not carry them up yourself, Bridget?"

"I am afraid not, ma'am; there's only one trunk, and it looks heavy."

"Oh!" cried Lettice, "I can come and help you. We can carry it up together, for Myra and I carried it down together." And she was quitting the room. But Mrs. Melwyn laid her hand upon her shoulder.

"No, my dear, upon no account; Bridget, fetch up the gardner's boy, he'll help you to carry the trunk up."

Mrs. Melwyn looked excessively annoyed and distressed. Lettice could not imagine what could be the matter.

The gentle, kind lady seemed nervous and embarrassed. At last, evidently making a very great effort with herself, she got out, "Excuse me, my dear, but there is a little thing—I would rather not, if you please—servants are so insolent, you know they are ill brought up; if you please, my dear, it will be better not to offer to do things for yourself, which young ladies don't usually undertake to do; such as carrying up trunks. And then, I think, it will be better not to allude to past circumstances, servants are apt to have such a contempt for people that have not been very rich. It's very strange and wrong, but so it is. You will be more comfortable, I think, if you maintain your own dignity. I hope you will not be hurt at me for giving you this little hint, Miss Arnold."

"Hurt! Oh, madam!" And Lettice could not forbear taking up the beautiful white hand of this most fair and delicate woman, and kissing it with the most respectable reverence. "Whatever you will be so very kind to suggest to me I will so carefully attend to, and I shall be so much obliged to you."

How sweet was this gentle manner to poor Mrs. Melwyn! She began to feel lightened from quite a load of anxiety. She began to believe, that happen what would, she should never be *afraid* of Lettice. "Catherine was quite right; oh, what a comfort it would be!"

"Well then," she continued with more cheerfulness, "I will go away and see that your things are sent up to you, for there is no time to be lost. Bless me! it's striking seven. You never *can* be ready. Oh! here it comes! I forgot to tell you that Bridget is to answer your bell and wait upon you. I have settled all that—you will find her quite good-natured and attentive; she's really an obliging girl."

And so she was. The upper-housemaid took care to preserve strict discipline, and exact prompt obedience in her own department, whatever the mistress of the mansion might do in hers.

"Well, then, I will leave you and make your excuses to the general, and you will follow me to the dining-room as soon as you can. We must not keep dinner waiting any longer. You will excuse that ceremony, I am sure. The general is an invalid, you know, and these matters are important to his health."

And so saying, she glided away, leaving Lettice almost too much astonished to be delighted with all this consideration and kindness—things to which she had been little accustomed. But the impression she received, upon the whole, was very sweet. The face and manner of Mrs. Melwyn were so excessively soft; her very dress, the color of her hair, her step, her voice; everything spoke so much gentleness. Lettice thought her the loveliest being she had ever met with. More charming even than Catherine, more attaching even than Mrs. Danvers. She felt very much inclined to adore her.

She was but a very few hours longer in the house before pity added to this rising feeling of attachment; and I believe there is nothing attaches the inferior to the superior like pity.

Dressed in one of her best new dresses, and with her hair done up as neatly as she possibly could in that hurry, Lettice made her way to the dining-room.

It was a large, lofty, very handsome, and rather awfully resounding room, with old family pictures upon every side. There was a sideboard set out sparkling with glass and plate; a small table in the middle of the apartment with silver covers and dishes shining in the light of four wax candles; a

blazing fire, a splendid Indian screen before the door; two footmen in liveries of pink and white, and a gentleman in a black suit, waiting. The general and Mrs. Melwyn were seated opposite to each other at table.

The soup had been already discussed, and the first course was set upon the table when Miss Arnold entered.

Had she been a young lady born, an obsequious footman would have been ready to attend her to her seat, and present her with a chair; as it was, she would have been spared this piece of etiquette, and she was making her way to her chair without missing the attention, when the general, who observed this saucy footmen standing lounging about, without offering to move forward, frowned in what Lettice thought a most alarming way, and said in a stern voice, and significant manner, "What are you about?" to the two footmen. This piece of attention was bestowed upon her to her surprise and to Mrs. Melwyn's great satisfaction.

"We thought you would excuse us. The soup has been set aside for you," said the lady of the house.

"Oh, thank you, ma'am, pray don't trouble yourself."

"Give Miss Arnold soup."

Again in a stern, authoritative voice from the general. Mrs. Melwyn was used to the sternness, and most agreeably surprised at the politeness, and quite grateful for it. Lettice thought the voice and look too terrible to take pleasure in anything connected with it.

She had no need to feel gratitude either—it was not done out of consideration for her. The general, who, with the exception of Randall, kept, as far as he was concerned, every servant in the utmost subservience, did not choose that anyone who had the honor of a seat at his table should be neglected by those "rascals," as he usually styled his footmen.

It being the first evening, Mrs. Melwyn had too much politeness to require Miss Arnold to enter upon those after-dinner duties, the performance of which had been expressly stipulated for by Catherine; stipulated for, not only with Lettice, but with the general himself. She had made her father promise that he would suffer this young lady to undertake the place of reader—which Catherine had herself filled for some time, to the inexpressible relief of her mother—and that Miss Arnold should be permitted to try whether she could play well enough at backgammon to make an adversary worth vanquishing.

He had grumbled and objected, as a matter of course, to this arrangement, but had finally consented. However, he was not particularly impatient to begin; and besides, he was habitually a well-bred man, so that any duty which came under his category of good manners he punctually performed. People are too apt to misprize this sort of politeness of mere habit; yet, as far as it goes, it is an excellent thing. It enhances the value of a really kind temper in all the domestic relations, to an incalculable degree—a degree little appreciated by some worthy people, who think roughness a proof of sincerity, and that rudeness marks the honest truth of their affections. And where there is little kindness of nature, and a great deal of selfishness and ill-tempered indulgence, as in this cross old man before us, still the habit of politeness was not without avail; it kept him in a certain check, and certainly rendered him more tolerable. He was not quite such a brute bear as he would have been, left to his uncorrected nature.

Politeness is, and ought to be, a habit so confirmed, that we exercise it instinctively—without consideration, without attention, without effort, as it were; this is the very essence of the sort of politeness I am thinking of. It takes it out of the category of the virtues, it is true, but it places it in that of the qualities; and, in some matters, good qualities are almost as valuable, almost more valuable, than if they still continued among the virtues—and this of politeness, in my opinion, is one.

By virtues, I mean acts which are performed with a certain difficulty, under the sense of responsibility to duty, under the self-discipline of right principle; by qualities, I mean what is spontaneous. Constitutional good qualities are spontaneous. Such as natural sweetness of temper—natu-

ral delicacy of feeling—natural intrepidity; others are the result of habit, and end by being spontaneous—by being a second nature: justly are habits called so. Gentleness of tone and manner—attention to conventional proprieties—to people's little wants and feelings—are of these. This same politeness being a sort of summary of such, I will end this little didactic digression by advising all those who have the rearing of the young in their hands, carefully to form them in matters of this description, so that they shall attain *habits*—so that the delicacy of their perceptions, the gentleness of their tones and gestures, the propriety of their dress, the politeness of their manners, shall become spontaneous acts, done without reference to self, as things of course. By which means, not only much that is disagreeable to others is avoided, and much that is amiable attained, but a great deal of reference to self is in after-life escaped; and temptations to the faults of vanity—pride—envious comparisons with our neighbors, and the feebleness of self-distrust very considerably diminished.

And so, to return, the politeness of the general and Mrs. Melwyn led to this result, the leaving Miss Arnold undisturbed to make her reflections and her observations, before commencing the task which Mrs. Melwyn, for the last time, undertook for her, of reading the newspaper and playing the hit.

Lettice could not help feeling rejoiced to be spared this sort of public exhibition of her powers, till she was in a slight degree better acquainted with her ground; and she was glad to know, without being directly told, what it was customary to do in these respects. But in every other point of view, she had better, perhaps, have been reader than listener. For, if she gained a lesson as to the routine to be followed, she paid for it by receiving at the same time a considerably alarming impression of the general's ways of proceeding.

"Shall I read the newspaper this evening?" began Mrs. Melwyn, timidly.

"I don't care if you do," roughly.

Polite men, be it observed, *en passant*, do not at all make it a rule to exercise that habit to their wives. The wife is a thing apart from the rest of the world, out of the category of such proprieties. To be rude to his wife is no impeachment of a man's gentleman-like manners at all.

"Is there anything worth reading in it?"

"I am sure I don't know what you will think worth reading. Shall I begin with the leading article?"

"What is it all about?"

"I am sure I can't say."

"Can't you look?"

"The sugar question, I think."

"Well, what has the fool to say about that?"

"The speech of Lord — last night upon the much discussed subject of the sugar question, has no doubt been read and commented upon, in their various ways, and according to their different impressions—shall we say prejudices?—by our readers. The performance, it is upon all hands agreed, was masterly, and, as far as eloquence is concerned, that the accomplished statesman who uttered this remarkable speech did only justice to"—

"Well—well—well—well," in a sneering tone, "I really do wonder how long you could go on droning and dinning, and dinning and droning such palpably empty editorial nonsense as that into a man's ears. Now, I would be glad to ask you—merely to ask you, as a rational woman, Mrs. Melwyn—what possible amusement or profit can be drawn from a long exordium which says absolutely nothing—tells one absolutely nothing but what everyone knew before—stuff with which all editors of newspapers seem to think it necessary to preface their remarks. What in the name of — is the use of wasting your breath and my patience—can't you skip? Are you a mere reading machine, madam?"

"Shall I pass on to the next subject?"

"No, that's not my meaning—if you could take a meaning. What I want is only what every rational person expects when these confounded lucubrations of a stupid newspaper editor are read up—that the reader will have the sense to leave all these useless phrases and useless syllables out, and give the pith and marrow to the listener. Well—well, never mind—if you can't, you can't; get on, at all events."

Mrs. Melwyn colored faintly, looked nervous and

uneasy, glanced down the columns of the newspaper, and hesitated.

"Well—can't you go on? What's the use of sitting there, looking like a child of six years old who's afraid of being whipped? If you can't, you can't—if you haven't the sense, you haven't; but for—sake get on."

"Mr. — rose, and in a manner upon which we cannot exactly bestow our approbation, but which, nevertheless, seemed to us in an unaccountable manner to obtain the ear and the attention of a very crowded house, &c., &c."

"There you are again! why the deuce can't you pass over all that, and tell us what the confounded blockheads on that side did really say?"

"I read this debate to you yesterday, you know. These are only the editor's remarks upon it. Shall I give you the summary of last night's debate?"

"No, let's hear what the fool says upon this cursed sugar question. He's against the measure, that's one comfort."

"He does not seem to be so exactly," glancing down the page.

"I'll take the liberty of judging that matter myself, Mrs. Melwyn, if you'll only be so particularly obliging as to read on."

Which she did. Now reproached for reading in such a low, cluttering manner, with that d—d soft voice of hers, that it was impossible to hear; and when she raised it, asked, "What the deuce was the use of shouting so as to be heard by the fellows in the servants' hall?"

In this style the newspaper was at last, for better for worse, blundered through, in the most uncomfortable manner possible, by the terrified reader.

Lettice sat by, deeply attentive. She was a brave, high-spirited girl, and she did not feel dismayed; her predominant sentiment was self-congratulation that she should be able to spare that sweet, soft, kind Mrs. Melwyn the ungrateful task.

She sat observing, and laying down her own plans of proceeding. It was not the first time in her life she had been exposed to what is called scolding; a thing every day, I verily believe—and am most happy to do so—going more and more out of fashion, though still retained, as a *habit*, by many people otherwise well-meaning enough. It was retained in its full vigor by the general, who was not well-meaning at all; he usually meant nothing on earth by what he did, but the indulgence of the present humor, good, bad, or indifferent. Lettice had lived in a sphere of life where this sort of domestic violence used to be very common; and she had learned to bear it, even from the lips of those she loved, with patience. She knew this very well, and she thought to herself, "If I could get into the habit of hardly caring for it from those very near and dear to me, surely it will be easy enough to meet it with indifference from a poor, cross, peevish, suffering old man, whom I don't care for in the least. The way must be, to get into the habit of it from the first, to let the words:

"Pass by me as the idle wind which I regard not."

I must put all my vanity, all my spirit, all my own little tempers, quietly out of the way; and never trouble myself with what he says, but go reading on in the best way I can, to please him, but with the most unruffled outward appearance of tranquility; and the utmost secret indifference as to whether I succeed or not. He shall be sooner tired of scolding, than I of looking as if I never heard it. He'll give over if I can persevere, instead of looking all colors and all ways, as that dear, gentle Mrs. Melwyn does."

The trial at backgammon was, if such a thing could be, worse. It seemed as if it was impossible to give satisfaction here. The general not only played his own game, but insisted upon playing that of his adversary; and was by turns angry at her stupidity in missing an advantage through want of skill, asking, "What could be the possible interest or pleasure of playing with such a mere child?" and vexed, if the plan he pointed out ended in his own discomfiture, for he could not bear to lose.

Backgammon, too, was an unlucky game to be played with one of a temper such as his. Every favorable throw of the dice, it is true, filled him with a disagreeable sarcastic exultation; but positively bad one, and still more, a succession of bad ones, drove him furious. After a long course

of provoking throws, such as sometimes happen, he would seem half mad, storm, curse, and swear, in the most ridiculous; if it had not been blasphemous, manner; and sometimes end by banging the tables together, and vowing he would never play at this confounded game again as long as he lived.

There was an exhibition of this sort that very evening. Mrs. Melwyn looked much distressed, and almost ashamed, as she glanced at Lettice to see how she took it; but Lettice appeared to be too much engaged with a knot in her netting to seem to take it at all, which evidently relieved Mrs. Melwyn. The scene had not, however, been lost upon our friend, who had observed it with a smile of secret contempt.

Mentally, however, congratulating herself upon her good, robust nerves; such things, she well knew, being perilous to those cursed with delicacy of that sort. The best endeavors, the best intentions, would be without avail in such cases; such sufferers would find their powers of endurance destroyed by these successive acts of violence, till it would be impossible to meet them tolerably. Again she looked at Mrs. Melwyn, and with great pity. Again she rejoiced in the idea of saving her from what she perceived was, indeed, to such a frame and temper as hers, a source of very great suffering; and again she resolved to keep up her own spirits, and maintain the only true defense, courage and indifference. She felt sure, if she could only, by a little effort, do this for a short time, the effort would terminate in a habit; after which it would cost her little or nothing more.

The general, though polite to Lettice in their first communications, held her in far too little esteem to care one doit what he did or said before her. He was an excessively proud man; and the idea that a girl, so greatly his inferior in every way, should keep him in check, or venture even to make a remark upon him, far less presume to judge his conduct, never entered his head. I wonder what he would have felt, if he could have been made aware of that secret smile.

Now a tray with wine, spirits, and water, was introduced. The general took his accustomed glass of whisky-and-water, then opened his cigar-box, and began to smoke. This process invariably made Mrs. Melwyn feel rather sick, and she rose this evening to go away; but being asked what she was moving for, she resumed her seat, and sat till two cigars had been smoked, and the clock told half-past ten; when, as the general loved early hours, she was suffered to take her departure.

The servant entered with lighted candles. Mrs. Melwyn took one, and bade him give Miss Arnold another; and they went up stairs together.

"Good-night, my dear," said the lady of the house, with a wearied, worn air, and a tone in which there was a good deal of sadness.

She never could get used to these scenes, poor thing; every time the general was cross she felt it acutely; he had grown dreadfully cross since Catherine married. Mrs. Melwyn hardly knew what to do with him, or how to bear it.

"Good-night, my dear, I hope you will sleep comfortably."

"Can I be of any further use to you, madam, to-night?"

"Oh, no, thank you; don't come into my dressing-room; Randall is very particular; she considers that her own territory. She does not like anyone to come in, especially at night; but just let me look whether your fire burns," she added, entering Lettice's room.

The fire was blazing merrily; Mrs. Melwyn put her candle down upon the chimney-piece, and stood there a little while before it, looking again irresolute. It seemed as if she wished, and did not know how, to say something. Lettice stood at a short distance, respectfully expectant.

"I declare it's very cold to-night," with a little shiver.

"I did not feel it cold, but then this is so thoroughly comfortable a house."

"Do you think so? Shall you find it so? The wind comes sharply down the passages sometimes, but I wish, I hope, you won't care much for that—or—or—or—any little painful things; they can't be helped, you know, in this world."

"Ah, madam! if I may venture to say so, there

is one good thing one gets out of great hardships—little things do seem so *very* little afterward."

"Ay, if they are really little, but"—

"Things that are—that don't seem little to people of more gentle nurture, who have lived in a different way, seem, and are, little to those who have roughed it till they are themselves roughened. That was what I intended to say. One is so very happy to escape dreadful, real, positive distress, that all the rest is like mere play."

Mrs. Melwyn looked at her in a pensive, anxious, inquiring manner. She wanted to see if she was understood; she saw that she was. She saw something truly heartening and encouraging in the young girl's countenance. She shook hands with her and bade her good-night very affectionately, and went to her own dressing-room. Randall was cross that night as it was possible for the most tyrannical servant to be, but some way or other, Mrs. Melwyn did not feel as if she cared for it quite so much as usual; she had her mind filled with the image of Lettice. Something so very nice about her, she thought to herself, in one respect even better than Catherine. She should not be so afraid of her being distressed by disagreeable things; she should venture to tell her about Randall, and other vexations which she had carefully concealed from Catherine, lest they should make her unhappy. Thus she represented it to herself; the truth was, lest Catherine should make a point of Randall being parted with, an effort she knew herself quite incompetent to make.

She should be able to complain of Randall, without feeling that she should be urged to conquer her weakness, and part with her. There was something very comfortable in this; so Randall pouted away, and Mrs. Melwyn heeded it not very much, not nearly so much as usual; and when Randall perceived this, she was excessively offended, and more and more cross and disagreeable. She had quite quickness enough to perceive how much her despotism must be weakened by the rule being thus divided, and she saw even so early something of the effects she deprecated. The observation, however, did not tend to soften her or to render her more obliging, it was not the least in her plan to contend with the new-comer in this way; she meant to meet her, and her mistress, with open defiance, and bear both down by main force.

CHAPTER VI.

"Cowards die many times before their death."

—SHAKESPEARE.

THE courage of Lettice, as I have told you, was strong, and her nerves good, but in spite of this, assisted by the best resolutions in the world, she did find it a hard matter to stand the general. She was very hopeful the first day or two, the habitual politeness, of which I have spoken, came in aid. It exercised a sort of instinctive and involuntary check upon the old man's rude intemperance of language when irritated. Lettice did her very best to read the newspaper to his satisfaction; skipping every unnecessary word, just as Catherine had been accustomed to do, without hurting the sense in the least; and getting over the ground with all the rapidity the old veteran desire. This was a plan poor Mrs. Melwyn was far too nervous to adopt. If she missed a word it was sure to be the wrong one to miss—one necessary to, instead of encumbering the meaning. It was quite indispensable that she should read simply and straightforwardly what was put before her, or she was certain to get into confusion, and have herself scolded. Even the dreaded and dreadful backgammon did tolerably well, while the general's politeness to the stranger lasted. Lettice was surprised herself, to find how easily the task, which had appeared so awful, was discharged; but she had not long to congratulate herself. Gradually, at first by slow degrees, but afterward like the accelerated descent of a stone down the hill, acquired habit gave way to constitutional ill-humor. Alas, they tell us nature expelled with a pitchfork will make her way back again; most true of the unregenerated nature—most true of the poor blind heathen, or the poor untutored Christian, to all intents and purposes a heathen—too true even of those assisted by better considerations, higher principles, and higher aids.

First it was a little low grumbling; then a few impatient gestures; then a few impatient words—

words became sentences; sentences of invective—soon it was with her, just as it had been with others. This graduated progression assisted, however, gradually to harden and prepare her. She was resolved not to look frightened, though her very knees would knock together at times. She was determined never to allow herself to feel provoked or hurt, or ill-used, let the general be ever so rude; and to soften her heart by any such ideas she never allowed herself. Steadily she kept in mind that he was a suffering, ill-disciplined, irritable old man; and by keeping these considerations in view, she actually achieved the most difficult—almost heroic effort. She managed to attain a frame of mind in which she could pity his sufferings, feel indulgence for his faults, and remain quite placid under their effects as regarded herself.

This conduct before a very long time had elapsed produced an effect far more agreeable than she had ever ventured to anticipate.

The general began to like her.

Like many other cross people, he was excessively difficult to be pleased in one article—the way people took his scoldings. He was offended if they were received with cheerfulness, in the way Edgar had tried to laugh them off, he was still more vexed if people seemed hurt or suffering under them; if they cried, it was bad, indeed. Like many others not absolutely wicked and cruel, though he could not control his temper, he really did feel vexed at seeing the pain he had produced. His conscience would cry out a little at such times. Now, nothing made him so uncomfortable and irritable, as having a quarrel with his conscience; a thing that did not very often happen, to be sure, the said conscience being in his case not a very watchful guardian, but it was all the more disagreeable when it spoke. The genuine good temper and habitual self-possession, the calmness without disrespect, the cheerfulness without carelessness, the respectful attention stripped of all meanness or subservience which Lettice managed to preserve in her relations with him, at last made its way quite to his heart, that is to say, to his taste or fancy, for I don't think he had much of a heart. He began to grow quite fond of her, and one day delighted, as much as he surprised Mrs. Melwyn, by saying, that Miss Arnold really was a very pretty sort of young woman, and he thought suited them very well. And so the grand difficulty of managing with the general's faults was got over, but there remained Mrs. Melwyn's and the servants.

Lettice had never laid her account at finding any faults in Mrs. Melwyn. That lady from the first moment she beheld her, had quite won her heart. Her elegance of appearance, the dove-like softness of her countenance, the gentle sweetness of her voice, all conspired to make the most charming impression. Could there lie anything under that sweet outside, but the gentlest and most indulgent of temper?

No, she was right there, nothing could be more gentle, more indulgent than was Mrs. Melwyn's temper; and Lettice had seen so much of the rough, the harsh, the captious, and the unamiable during her life, that grant her the existence of those two qualities, and she could scarcely desire anything more. She had yet to learn what are the evils which attend the timid and the weak.

She had yet to know that there may be much concealed self-indulgence, where there is a most yielding disposition; and that they who are too cowardly to resist wrong and violence courageously, from a weak and culpable indulgence of their own shyness and timidity, will afford a poor defense to those they ought to protect, and expose them to innumerable evils.

Lettice had managed to become easy with the general; she could have been perfectly happy with Mrs. Melwyn, but nothing could get over the difficulties with the servants. Conscious of the misrule they exercised: jealous of the new-comer—who soon showed herself to be a clever and spirited girl—a sort of league was immediately instituted among them, its declared object being either to break her spirit, or get rid of her out of the house. The persecutions she endured, the daily minute troubles and vexations, the difficulties cast in her path by these dangerous yet contemptible foes, it would be endless to describe.

Whatever she wanted she could not get done.

Even Bridget, under the influence of the upper-housemaid, proved a broken reed to lean upon. Her fire would never be lighted, nor her room done at the proper time; and when she came down with red hands, purple cheeks, and, worst of all, a red nose, looking this cold spring the very picture of chill and misery, the general would look cross, and Mrs. Melwyn not pleased, and would wonder "How she could get so starved, and why she did not make them light her fire."

She could make no reply but that she would ask Bridget to be more punctual.

It was worse, when do what she would—ring as she would—nobody would come to fasten her dress for dinner till the last bell was sounding; and when it was impossible for her to pay all those nice attentions to her appearance which the general's critical eye demanded. Though he said nothing he would upon such occasions look as if he thought her a sloven; and Mrs. Melwyn, on her side, seemed excessively fretted and uneasy, that her favorite would do herself so little justice, and run the risk of forfeiting the general's favor; and this last piece of injustice, Lettice did feel it hard to bear.

It was the same in all the other minutiae of domestic life. Every trifling circumstance, like a midge's sting, though insignificant in itself, was rendered in the sum total most troublesome.

If they were going out walking, Miss Arnold's shoes were never cleaned. She provided herself with several pairs, that one at least might always be ready, and she not keep the general and Mrs. Melwyn waiting. It was of no use. The shoes were never ready. If there were several pairs, they were lost, or odd shoes brought up.

She did not care for labor. She had no foolish pride about serving herself, she had been used to that sort of thing; she had not the slightest wish on earth to be a fine lady; but that was forbidden. It was one of the things Mrs. Melwyn had made a point of, and continued to make a point of; but then, why did she not take care she should be better served?

She, the mistress in her own house! Was it indifference to her guest's comforts? No, her unremitting personal kindness forbade that idea. What was it then, that left her helpless guest thus exposed to want and insult? Yes, *want!* I may use the word; for in her new sphere of action, the things she required were absolute necessities. The want in its way was as great as she had ever known. Yes, insult—for every little negligence was felt as an insult—Lettice knew too well that as an insult it was intended. What made this kind Mrs. Melwyn permit such things? Weakness, nothing but weakness—culpable weakness—horror of that which would give her feeble spirit pain.

Lettice found it extremely difficult to be candid in this instance. She who had never experienced what this weakness of the spirit was, found it almost impossible to be indulgent to it. She felt quite vexed and sore. But when she looked so, poor Mrs. Melwyn would put on such a sad, anxious, weary face, that it was impossible not to feel concerned for her, and to forgive her at once. And so this good, generous, kind-hearted being's temper achieved another victory. She was able to love Mrs. Melwyn in spite of all her weakness, and the evil she in consequence suffered; and this indulgent affection made everything easy.

There were times, however, when she found it almost too difficult to get on; but upon one occasion after another occurring of this nature, and still more when she discovered that Mrs. Melwyn was a yet greater sufferer from this servile tyranny than herself, she at last determined to speak out, and see whether things could not be established upon a more reasonable and proper footing.

There was one day a terrible quarrel with Randall. It happened that Randall was from home, drinking tea with a friend. She had either bound up the general's ailing arm too tight, or the arm had swelled; however, for some reason or other the injured part became extremely painful. The general fidgeted and swore, but bore it for some time with the sort of resolute determination, with which, to do him justice, he was accustomed to meet pain. At last the aching became so intolerable that it was scarcely to be endured; and after ringing twenty times to inquire whether Randall was come

home, and uttering a heavy imprecation each time he was answered in the negative; what between pain and impatience he became so fevered that he really seemed quite ill, and his sufferings were evidently more than he could well endure. Poor Mrs. Melwyn, helpless and feeble, dared not propose to do anything for him, though she suffered—soft, kind creature that she was—almost more in witnessing his distress than he did in the midst of it. At last Lettice ventured to say, that she thought it a great pity the general should continue to suffer this agony, which she felt assured must be positively dangerous, and modestly ventured to suggest that she should be allowed to undo the bandage and relieve the pressure.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Melwyn, in a hurried, frightened way, "could you venture? Suppose you should do mischief; better wait, perhaps."

"Easily said, ma'am," cried the general. "It's not your arm that's aching as if it would drop from your body, that's plain. What's that you're saying Miss Arnold?"

"If you could trust me to do it, I was saying; if you would give me leave, I would undo the bandage and endeavor to make it more comfortable. I am afraid that this pain and tight binding may bring on positive inflammation. I really should not be afraid to try; I have seen Mrs. Randall do it hundreds of times. There is no difficulty in it."

"Dear Lettice, how you talk!" said Mrs. Melwyn, as if she were afraid Randall was behind the door. "No difficulty! How could Randall bear to hear you say so?"

"I don't know ma'am; perhaps she would contradict me. But I think at all events there is no difficulty that I could not manage."

"Well, then, for Heaven's sake, try, child!" cried the general; "for really the pain is as if all the dogs in Hockley were gnawing at it. Come along; do something, for the love of—"

He suffered Lettice to help him off with his coat, and to undo the bandage, which she accomplished very handily; and then observed that Mrs. Randall, in her haste to depart upon her visit, had bound up the wound in a most careless manner; and the irritation had already produced so serious an inflammation that she was quite alarmed, and suggested that the doctor should be sent for.

The general swore at the idea of the doctor, and yet more violently at that old hag Randall's confounded carelessness. Mrs. Melwyn looked miserable; she saw the case was bad, and yet she knew that to send for the doctor, and take it out of Randall's hands, would be an insult never to be forgiven.

But Lettice was steady. She was not quite ignorant in these matters, and she felt it her duty to be firm. She expostulated and remonstrated, and was just carrying her point when Mrs. Randall came home; and, having heard below how things were going on, hurried, uncalled for, into the dining-room.

She came in in a mighty pucker, as she would herself have called it, and began asking who had dared to open the wound and expose it to the air; and, seeing Miss Arnold preparing to apply a bread-and-water poultice, which she had made, fell into such a passion of rage and jealousy that she forgot herself so far as to snatch it from Lettice's hand, vowing, if anybody was to be allowed to meddle with *her* arm, she would never touch it again so long as she lived.

Mrs. Melwyn turned pale, and began in her softest way:

"Now, really, Randall. Don't be angry, Randall—do listen, Randall. The bandage was too tight; I assure you it was. We should not have thought of it else."

"What the devil, Randall, are you about to do now?" cried the general, as she took possession of the arm, in no gentle fashion.

"Bind it up again, to be sure, and keep the air out of it."

"But you hurt me confoundedly. Ah! it's more than I can bear. Don't touch it—it's as if it were on fire!"

"But it must be bound up, I say," going on without the least regard to the torture she was evidently putting him to.

But Lettice interfered.

"Indeed, Mrs. Randall," she said, "I do not think that you seem to be aware of the state of

inflammation that the arm is in. I assure you, you had better apply the bread-and-water poultice, and send for Mr. Lysons."

"You assure *me*. Much you know about the matter, I should fancy."

"I think I know this much. Dear Mrs. Melwyn! Dear general! It is more serious than you think. Pray, let me write for Mr. Lysons!"

"I do believe she's right, Randall, for the infernal torture you put me to is more than I can bear. Ach! Let it go, will you? Undo it! Undo it!"

But Mrs. Randall, unrelentingly, bound on.

"Have done, I say! Undo it! Will nobody undo it? Lettice Arnold, for Heaven's sake!" His face was bathed with the sweat of agony.

Randall persisted; Mrs. Melwyn stood pale, helpless, and aghast; but Lettice hastened forward, scissors in hand, cut the bandage, and liberated the tortured arm in a minute.

Mrs. Randall was in an awful rage. She forgot herself entirely; she had often forgotten herself before; but there was something in this, being done in the presence of a third person, of one so right-minded and spirited as Lettice, which made both the general and his wife view it in a new light. A sort of vail seemed to fall from before their eyes; and for the first time, they both seemed—and simultaneously—aware of the impropriety and the degradation of submitting to it.

"Randall! Randall!" remonstrated Mrs. Melwyn, still very gently, however; but it was a great step to remonstrate at all—but Randall was abusing Lettice most violently, and her master and mistress into the bargain, for being governed by such as her! "Randall! Randall! Don't—you forget yourself!"

But the general, who had been silent a second or two, at last broke forth and roared:

"Have done with your infernal noise! won't you, you bedlam! Here, Lettice, give me the poultice; put it on, and then write for Lysons, will you?"

In matters such as this, the first step is everything. Mrs. Melwyn and her fiery partner had both been passive as a poor bewitched hen, we are told, is with a straw over her neck. Once shift her position and the incubus is gone.

The arrival of Mr. Lysons completed the victory. Mortification was upon the eve of setting in. The relief from the bandage, and the emollient poultice applied by Lettice, had in all probability saved the general's life.

Little Mrs. Randall cared for this demonstration of her mistaken treatment; she had been too long accustomed to triumph, to yield the field undisputed to a rival. She took refuge in sulky silence, and when Mr. Lysons was gone, desired to speak with Mrs. Melwyn.

The usual harangue was made. "As she could no longer give satisfaction—would Mrs. Melwyn please to provide herself in a month."

The blood ran cold to Mrs. Melwyn's heart. What! Randall! Impossible! What should she do? What would the general do? What would become of the servants? Who would look after them? What could be done without the faithful Randall?

"Oh, Randall! you don't think of leaving me," she began.

I am not going to repeat the dialogue, which was much the same as that which usually ensues when the mistress entreats the maid to stay, thus putting herself into an irremediably false position. The result of such entreaties was the usual one. Randall, assured of victory, took the matter with a high hand, and, most luckily for all parties, refused to be mollified.

Then poor Mrs. Melwyn, in dismay and despair, returned to the drawing-room. She looked quite ill; she dared not tell the general what had happened—positively dared not. She resolved to make one other appeal to Randall first; to bribe her, as she had often done before, to bribe high,—higher than ever. Anything rather than part with her.

But she was so nervous, so restless, so miserable, that Lettice observed it with much compassion, and came and sat by her, which was her way of comforting her friend when she saw she wanted comfort. Mrs. Melwyn took her hand, and held

It between both hers, and looked as if she greatly wanted comfort, indeed.

The general, soon after this, rose to go to bed. It was earlier than his usual hour, for he was quite worn out with what he had suffered.

So he left the two ladies sitting over the fire, and then Mrs. Melwyn at last opened her heart, and disclosed to her friend the dismal tidings—the cause of her present misery—and related in detail the dreadful occurrence of Randall's resignation.

It was time, Lettice thought, to speak out, and she determined to venture upon it. She had long anxiously desired to emancipate the woman she loved with all the intensity of a child, from the fearful yoke under which she suffered; to dissolve the pernicious enchantment which surrounded her. She spoke, and she did so with so much gentleness, reason, firmness, good nature, that Mrs. Melwyn yielded to the blessed influence. In short, it was that night determined that Randall's resignation, so far as Mrs. Melwyn was concerned, should be accepted. If that potentate chose to communicate her resolution herself to the general, it was well, and he must decide; otherwise Lettice would take upon herself to do this, and, unless he opposed the measure, Randall should go.

With little difficulty Lettice persuaded Mrs. Melwyn not to ring for Randall that night, saying that now she had resigned her position, her mistress had better allow herself to be put to bed by her friend. This was not a difficult task. That she should not meet Randall again was what Mrs. Melwyn in her terror as much desired as Lettice did in her prudence. In short, the general, under the influence of Lettice's representations—she was beginning to gain great influence with him—consented to part with the maid; and Lettice had the inconceivable satisfaction of herself carrying to that personage her wages, and a handsome gratuity, and of seeing her that very morning quit the house, which was done with abundance of tears, and bitter lamentations over the ingratitude of mankind.

How the house felt after she was gone, those who have been visited with a domestic plague of this nature will understand. To those who have not, so great a result from so apparently insignificant a cause would be utterly unimaginable.

"And so they lived very happy ever afterward."

Well—don't stare—they really *did*.

A good genius was substituted for an evil one. Under her benign influence it is astonishing how smoothly and merrily things went on. The general was so comfortable that he very often forgot to be cross; Mrs. Melwyn, content with everything, but her power of showing her love for Lettice—though she did this in every way she could think of.

And so I will leave this good, sensible, God-fearing girl for the present,

"blessing and blest in all she does,"

and tell you how Myra went to Mrs. Fisher, and something about that lady.

CHAPTER VII.

Bless the Lord, oh my soul! and all that is within me bless his holy name;

Who forgiveth all thy iniquities and healeth all thy diseases.

Who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.

MRS. FISHER.

I **MUST** now introduce you to Mrs. Fisher: she is so great a favorite of mine, that before I relate what became of Myra, I must make you acquainted with this lady.

Mrs. Fisher was a respectable gentlewoman-like personage of about fifty-four, of a grave, authoritative and somewhat severe aspect; but with the remains of very extraordinary personal beauty which she had once possessed in an eminent degree. She was somewhat above the middle size, of an erect, firm, full figure, her hair now gently turning gray, drawn over her finely proportioned forehead; her eyes large, and of a fine color and form—clear and steady; her mouth expressive of sense and temper; and her dress and character with the rest. Mrs. Fisher was always handsomely dressed in silks of the best description, but in slight mourning, which she always wore; and on her head, also, a cap

rather plainer than the mode, but of the finest and most expensive materials: nothing could be more dignified and complete than her appearance.

When first Myra was introduced to her she was both daunted and disappointed; the gravity amounting almost to sternness, with which Mrs. Fisher received her, and explained to her the duties she was expected to perform, awed in the first place, and mortified in the second. The establishment of this fashionable modiste, with which Myra had associated nothing but laces and ribbons, dresses and trimmings, embroidery and feathers, flattery and display, struck cold and dull upon her imagination. She was introduced into a handsomely but very plainly furnished sitting-room, where no one trace of any of those pretty things were to be seen, and heard of nothing but regularity of hours, persevering industry, Quaker neatness, attention to health, and the strictest observance of the rules of what she thought quite a prudish propriety.

Mrs. Fisher's life had been one of vicissitude, and in its vicissitudes, she, a strong, earnest-minded woman, had learned much. She had known sorrow, privation, cruelly hard labor, and the loneliness, of utter desolation of the heart. She had, moreover, been extremely beautiful, and she had experienced those innumerable perils to which such a gift exposes an unprotected girl, struggling for her bread, under the cruellest circumstances of oppressive labor. Every description of hardship, and every description of temptation belonging to perhaps the hardest and almost the most dangerous position of female life, Mrs. Fisher had gone through.

She had outlived its suffering and escaped its snares.

The suffering, thanks to one of the finest constitutions in the world; the snares, thanks to what she always, with inexhaustible gratitude, acknowledged as the special mercy and providence of God.

An orphan at the dangerous age of seventeen, the lovely blooming young creature was placed by her friends in one of the most fashionable and largest milliners' establishments at that time in London, and had found herself at once miserable and excited, oppressed and flattered.

The mistress of this flourishing house, intent upon making a rapid fortune before the years in which she could enjoy it should come to a close, cared little—I might say nothing—for the welfare of the poor creatures whose labors were to construct that edifice. She, in fact, never thought about them. Want of thought may be pleaded as the excuse, wretched one as it is, for the cruelties of those days. People certainly had not the claim of common humanity sounded into their ears as it is into all ears now. A few admirable philanthropists talked of it, and preached it; but it was not to be heard calling in the streets, as it is the triumph of our day to acknowledge, till the hardest heart for very shame is forced to pay some attention to the call.

It never entered into Miss Lavington's head that she had any other business with her young women, but to get all the work she possibly could out of their hands, and as well done, and as speedily done as possible. If she objected to night-work in addition to day-work, it was not in the slightest degree out of compassion for the aching limbs and wearied eyes of the poor girls; but because wax candles were expensive, and tallow ones were apt to drip; and there was always double the duty required from the superintendent (her special favorite), to keep the young women at those times to their duty, and prevent the materials from being injured.

Oh! those dreadful days and nights of the season, which the poor Lucy Miles at that place went through.

She—accustomed to the sweet fresh air of the country, to the cheerful variety of daily labor in her father's large farm, and under the care of a brisk, clever, but most kind and sensible mother—to be shut up twelve, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, nay twenty hours before a birthnight, in the sickening atmosphere of the close work-room. The windows were rarely opened, if ever; for the poor young things were so unnaturally chilly for want of exercise and due circulation of the blood, that they said they should, and perhaps they might, have

taken cold if fresh air were admitted. There was nothing they all dreaded so much as taking cold; those fatal coughs, which every season thinned the ranks, to be filled with fresh victims, were invariably attributed to some particular occasion when they had "taken cold." They did not know that they were rejecting the very cordial of life and inhaling poison when they kept the room so close.

Oh! for the dreadful weariness which proceeds from inaction of the limbs! so different from the wholesome fatigue of action. Inaction where the blood is stagnating in every vein; inaction, after which rest is not rest, but a painful effort of the repressed currents to recover their circulating power—so different from the delightful sensation of wholesome rest after physical exertion.

At first she felt it almost insupportable. I have heard her say that it seemed at times as if she would have given years of her existence to be allowed to get up and walk up and down the room for a few minutes. The sensation was so insupportable. That craving desire of the body for what it is in want of—be it water, be it bread, be it rest, be it change of posture—is so dreadful in its urgency. The most abominable tortures men have in their wickedness invented are founded upon this fact—tortures that render the black history of inquisitors yet blacker; and here it was, in one at least of its numerous forms, daily inflicted upon a set of helpless young women, by a person who thought herself perfectly justifiable, and whose conscience never pricked her in the least.

Such is negligent moral habit.

Oh! the delight, at meal-times, to spring up, I was going to say—I meant to get up, for there was no spring left in these poor stiffened frames. Oh! the delight when the eye of that superintendent was no longer watching the busy circle, and her voice calling to order anyone who durst just to raise a head, and pause in the unintermitting toil. Oh! the delight to get up and come to breakfast, or dinner, or tea.

They had not much appetite when they came to their meals, to be sure. There was only one thing they were always ready to enjoy, and that was their tea. That blessed and long-abused tea, which has done more to sweeten private life with its gentle warmth and excitement, than any cordial that has ever been invented. It is but a cordial, however; it is not a nourishment; though a little sugar, and wretched blue milk, such as London milk used to be, may be added to it. Most of the young ladies, however, preferred it without these additions; they found it more stimulating so, I believe, poor things!

Such nourishment as they received, it is plain, would ill supply the rapid exhaustion of their employment. One by one in the course of the season they sickened and dropped off; some died out and out; some, alas! tempted by suffering and insupportable fatigue, or by that vanity and levity which seems to be too common a result with many girls living together, did worse. There would have been a heavy record against her every June, if Miss Lavington had taken the trouble to note down what had become of her missing young ladies.

I said they were relieved from their irksome continuance in one posture by going to their meals, and what a relief it was; but they did not always get that. When there was more than usual to be done, their tea would be brought to them where they sat, and there would be no intermission.

So things went on at Miss Lavington's in those days. I wonder in how many establishments of the same description things go on so now! How many to which that voice of humanity which "calls in the streets" has not yet penetrated!

We shall by-and-by see what was the case in Mrs. Fisher's, but for the present we will go on with her history.

So beautiful a young creature as she was could not long escape trials, yet more to be lamented than those of physical suffering.

In the first place, there was the conversation of the young ladies themselves; a whispering manner of conversation when at work; a busy chattering of emancipated tongues during the intervals. And what was it all about?

Why, what was it likely to be about?—love and lovers, beauty and its admirers, dress and its advantages, he and him, and, dear me, weren't you

in the Park last Sunday? Where could you be? and did you not see the carriage go by? What had you on? Oh, that pink bonnet. I cribbed a bit of Mrs. M——'s blond for a voilette. If people will send their own materials they deserve as much. I've heard Mrs. Saunders (the superintendent) say so scores of times. Well, well, and I saw it, I'm certain of it. Well, did anything come of it?

Alas! alas! and so on, and so on, and so on.

And Lucy was very soon taught to go on Sundays into the Park. At first, poor girl, merely to breathe the fresh air and inhale the delicious west wind, and look at trees and grass, and cows and deer once more, and listen to the birds singing.

At first she thought the crowds of gayly-dressed people quite spoiled the pleasure of the walk, and tried to coax her companions to leave the ring, and come and walk in the wood with her; but she soon learned better, and was rapidly becoming as bewitched with the excitement of gazing, and the still greater excitement of being gazed at, as any of them.

She was so uncommonly beautiful that she got her full—and more than her full share of the latter pleasure; and it was not long before she had those for whom she looked out amid the crowds upon the ring, and felt her heart beat with secret delight as she saw them.

Then, as her health began to decline, as dislike insupportable for her occupation and its confinement; as weariness not to be described, came on; as longings for little luxuries to be seen in every shop which she passed by, for fruit or confectionary, haunted her palled and diseased appetite as the vision of food haunts the wretch who is starving; as the desire of fine clothes, in which her companions managed to array themselves; as the more insidious, and more honorable longings of the heart, the disconsolate heart, beset her; cravings for affection and sympathy; when all these temptations were embodied together in the shape of one, but too gentle, and insinuating—oh, then it was perilous work indeed!

Her mother had tried to give her a good, honest, homely education; had made such a christian of her, as going to church, reading a chapter in the Bible on a Sunday, and the catechism makes of a young girl. There was nothing very vital, or earnest about it, but such as it was, it was honest, and Lucy feared her God and revered her Savior. Such sentiments were something of a defense, but it is to be feared that they were not firmly enough rooted in the character to have long resisted the force of overwhelming temptation.

This she was well aware of, and acknowledged to herself; and hence her deep, pervading, ineffable gratitude, for the Providence which she believed had saved her.

She was getting along very fast on the evil road upon which she had entered. Every Sunday the progress which she made was fearful. A few more, at the pace at which she was advancing, and there would have been an end of it, when a most unexpected accident arrested her in the fatal career.

One remarkably fine Sunday, when all the members of the establishment had been enjoying their usual recreation in the Park, just as Lucy and her giddy friends were coming through Grosvenor Gate, they saw the superintendent before them.

"There's that old Saunders, I declare!" cried one. "Stand back a little, won't ye? she'll see our bonnets else, and I'll be bound she'll know the rosetts, and where they come from."

There was time for no more. Mrs. Saunders, who was rather late, being in haste to get home, attempted to cross, as a carriage at full speed came driving down Park Lane and before the gentleman within could draw up, the unfortunate woman was under the horses' heels. There was a terrible bustle. The young ladies with the rosetts managed to escape; but Lucy, who had at least preserved integrity thus far, and had nothing about her dress not strictly her own, rushed forward, and helped to raise the poor woman, declaring she knew who she was, and was placed with her by the assistants in the hackney coach in which she was carried home.

Lucy was of a naturally kind and humane disposition; and her care of the poor suffering woman during the transit to Miss Lavington's—uni-

ted to the kindness and assiduity with which, every one else but the under-maid of all being absent, she tended and waited upon her—so engaged Mrs. Saunders' affection, that afterward, during the whole of the subsequent illness, which broken limbs and ribs occasioned, she made it her particular request to Miss Lavington that Lucy might be spared from the work-room to nurse and keep her company; adding for that lady's satisfaction, that though the best nurse, and nicest young girl of the lot, she certainly, being the youngest, was the least of a proficient in the peculiar art she followed.

The poor woman lay groaning piteously upon her bed, waiting the arrival of the surgeon. The surgeon, an elderly man, was out of town, and could not attend; a young man appeared in his place. He had just joined himself to the old man in the quality of an assistant and future partner; and hearing that the case was one of an accident, and urgent, he hurried to the house, resolving to send for more experienced assistance, if such should be found necessary.

He was shown up stairs, and hastily entered the room in which the sufferer lay. She was very much bruised about the chest, and she drew her breath with difficulty; and though exceedingly weak and faint, was unable to lay down. She was resting in the arms of one who appeared to the young man like an angel.

The lovely girl, with a face of the tenderest pity, was holding the poor groaning woman upon one arm, bending over her with an air of almost divine kindness, and softly wiping the dew-drops which in the agony came starting upon the patient's brow.

The young man received an impression which death alone effaced, though the bright visionary glance was only momentary. He was instantly by the side of his patient, and soon with much skill and courage doing what was necessary for immediate relief, though at the very first moment when he discovered the serious nature of the case, he had begged the young lady to tell Miss Lavington that it would be proper to send for some surgeon of more experience and eminence than himself to take the direction of it.

"Don't go away," said Mrs. Saunders feebly, as Lucy was rising to obey. "Don't send her away, mister—I can't do without her—Miss Lavington's not at home—one need not ask her for me. Who should be sent for?"

The young man named a gentleman high in his profession. Was it that able and benevolent man whom the world has so lately lost? That kind, frank, manly, courageous man of genius, whom no one approached but to find help and comfort? I don't know—but be he who he might, when he did at length arrive, he gave the most unqualified praise to the proceedings of our young gentleman, and called the color to the pale cheek of the young and serious-looking student by his approbation. He finished his visit by assuring Mrs. Saunders that she could not be in safer hands than those in which he had found her, and recommended her to put herself entirely under the charge of the young practitioner, adding an assurance that he would be ready at any instant to come if he should be wanted; and that he would, at all events, call once or twice as a friend during the progress of the case.

Mrs. Saunders liked the looks of the young man much—and who did not? and was quite contented with this arrangement, to which, as I told you, was added the comfort of retaining Lucy Miles as her nurse and companion during what threatened to be a very tedious confinement. Miss Lavington well knew the value of a Mrs. Saunders in such an establishment as hers, and was willing to make any sacrifice to forward her recovery.

So Lucy left the wearying work-room and the dangerous recreations of the Sunday, to sit and watch by the bedside of a peevish, uncomfortable sort of an old woman, who was perpetually making demands upon her patience and good-nature, but who really suffered so greatly from her accident, that Lucy's pity and kindness were proof against everything. The young surgeon went and came—went and came—and every time he came, this angel of beauty and goodness was ministering by the old woman's bed. And those eyes of his, eyes of such prevailing power in their almost enthusiastic expression of serious earnestness, were bent upon her; and sometimes her eyes, soft and

melting as those of the dove, or bright and lustrous as twin stars, met his.

He could not but linger in the sick woman's room a little longer than was necessary, and the sick woman unwittingly favored this, for she took a great liking to him, and nothing seemed to refresh and amuse her amid her pains like a little chat with this nice young man. And then the young surgeon remarked that at such times Lucy was allowed to sit quietly down and amuse herself with a little needlework, and he thought this an excellent reason for making his visits as long as he decently could.

The young nurse and the young doctor all this while had conversed very little with each other; but she listened and she gazed, and that was quite enough. The case proved a very serious one. Poor Mrs. Saunders, superintendent as she was, and not workwoman-driver, not slave—yet could no more than the rest escape the deleterious effects of the close work-room. Her constitution was much impaired. The wines and cordials she had accustomed herself to take to support nature, as she thought, under these fatigues, had increased the mischief, the wounds would not heal as they ought; contusions would not disperse; the internal injury in the chest began to assume a very threatening appearance. Mr. L. came to the assistance of the young surgeon repeatedly; all that human skill could do was done, but Mrs. Saunders grew alarmingly worse.

For a long time she resisted the evidence which her own sensations might have afforded her, and avoided asking any questions which might enlighten her. She was determined not to die; and, even in a case so awfully serious and real as this, people seem to cling to the persuasion, so prevailing in lighter circumstances, that because a thing *shan't* be, it won't be, and because they are determined it is not, it is not. So, for many days, Mrs. Saunders went on, exceedingly angry if everybody did not say she was getting better, and half inclined to dismiss her young surgeon, much as she liked him, because he looked grave after he had visited her injuries.

He *did* look grave, very grave. He was exceedingly perplexed in his mind as to what he ought to do: young surgeon as he was, fresh from those schools which, alas! so many who are acquainted with them represent as the very nurseries of infidelity and license both in speech and action, he was a deeply, seriously pious man. Such young men there are, who, like those three, walking unscathed through the furnace of fire in the faith of the Lord their God, walk through a more terribly destructive furnace—the furnace of temptation—in the same faith, and "upon their bodies the fire hath no power, neither is a hair of the head singed."

In what tears, in what prayers, in what anguished hope, what fervent aspiration, this sole treasure of a widowed mother, steeped in poverty to the very lips, had been reared, it would be long to tell; but she had committed him to one *never* found faithless, and under that blessing she had found in her pure and disinterested love for the being intrusted to her charge, that which had given her an eloquence, and a power, and a strength, which had told upon the boy.

He proved one of those rare creatures who pass through every stage of existence, as child, as school-boy, as youth; through nursery, school, college, marked as some bright peculiar being—peculiar only in this one thing, sincere unaffected goodness. His religion had been, indeed, with him a thing little professed, and rarely talked about, but it had been a holy panoply about his heart—a bright shield, which had quenched all the darts of evil: it shone around him like something of a radiance from a higher world. There was a sort of glory round the young saint's head.

Such being the man, you will not be surprised to hear that his practice called forth most serious reflections—most melancholy and sad thoughts—and in no sick-room where he had ever attended more than in the present one.

He could not frequent the house as much as his attendance rendered necessary without being pretty well aware of the spirit of the place; and while he grieved over the ruinous waste of health to which these young creatures were exposed, he was struck to the heart with horror at the idea of their moral ruin.

Mrs. Saunders talked openly and unreservedly.

and betrayed the state of mind she was in; so completely, so entirely devoted to, wrapt up in, buried fathoms and fathoms deep in the things of this world; so totally lost to—so entirely to seek in everything connected with another: that the large, mournful, serious eye, as it turned to the sweet young creature sitting beside her, and passing her daily life in an element such as this, gazed with an expression of sad and tender pity such as the minister of heaven might cast upon a perishing soul.

She did not quite understand all this. Those looks of interest, so inexpressibly sweet to her, she thought were excited by the view of her position as affected her health and comfort. She thought it was that consumption which, sooner or later, she believed must be her fate, which he was anticipating with so much compassion. She was blind to the far more dreadful dangers which surrounded her.

Poor Mrs. Saunders! At last it could no longer be concealed from her. She must die.

He broke the intelligence to her in the gentlest terms, as she, at last, in a paroxysm of terror, asked the question; giving her what hope he could, but still not denying that she stood in a fearful strait. It was a terrible scene that followed. Such a frightful agitation and hurry to accomplish in a few counted hours what ought to have been the business of a life. Such calling for psalms and prayers; such piteous beseechings for help; and, last of all, such an awful awakening of a slumbering conscience.

Like Richard's bed, on the eve of Bosworth fight, it seemed as if the spectral shadows of all those she had injured in the body or soul, by her unerring demands upon one, and her negligence as to the other, rose a host of dismal spectres round. Their pale, exhausted, pleading looks, as she scolded and threatened, when the clock struck one, and the task was yet undone, and the head for a moment dropped, and the throbbing fingers were still. Those hollow coughs in which she would *not* believe—those hectic flushes that she would not see—and worse, those walks, those letters, at which she had connived, because the girls did so much better when they had some nonsense to amuse them.

What fearful revelations were made as she raved aloud, or sank into a drowsy, dreary delirium. The old clergyman, who attended her, consoled, and reasoned, and prayed in vain. The two young people—that lovely girl, and that feeling, interesting young man—stood by the bed appalled; he, ghastly pale—pale with an agony of despairing pity—she, trembling in every limb.

The death agony, and then the poor woman went to her account. There was no one in the room but themselves; it was late at night, the morning, indeed, began faintly to dawn. The maids were all gone to bed, glad enough to escape the scene. He stood silently watching the departing breath. It stopped. He gave a deep sigh, and, stooping down, piously closed the eyes. She had turned away in horror and in dread, but shedding some natural tears. He stood looking at her some time, as there she stood, weeping by the bed; at last he spoke:

"This may seem a strange time to choose, but I have something to say to you. Will you listen to me?"

She took her handkerchief from her eyes, and gazed at him with a wondering, gravesort of look, as a child might do. His voice had something so very remarkable in it.

He passed to the side where she was standing, and said, "I am a very, very poor man, and I have a helpless mother entirely dependent upon me for support, and, if it were my last morsel of bread, ay, and wife and children were perishing for want of it, it is *she* who should have it."

She only looked at him wondering like.

"This a fearful precipice upon which you stand. That poor creature has sunk into the gulf which yawns beneath your feet. May God, in his mercy, look upon her! But you, beautiful as one of heaven's angels—as yet pure and sinless as a child—must you fall, sink, perish, in this mass of loathsome corruption? Better starve, better die—far, far better."

"Alas, alas!" she cried, with a scared and terrified look. "Alas! alas! ten hundred thousand

times better. Oh, what must I do? what must I do?"

"Take up your cross, venture upon the hardships of a poor man's wife. Discard all the prides, and pomps, and vanities—the vain, vain delusions of flattery; trample upon the sin, triumph over the temptation. Put yourself under the protection of an honest man, who loves you from his soul. Starve, if it must be, but die the death of the righteous and pure."

She gazed at him, amazed; she did not yet understand him.

"Marry *me*. Come to my blessed, my excellent mother's roof. It is homely, but it is honest; and let us labor and suffer together, if need be. It is all I can offer you, but it will save you."

The arms, the beautiful arms were expanded, as it were, in a very agony of joy. The face! oh, was it not glorious in its beauty then! Did he ever forget it?

And so the contract was sealed, and she was rescued from the pit of destruction into which she was rapidly sinking.

And this it was that had excited such impassioned, such lasting, such devoted feelings of gratitude to Him who rules the course of this world, in a heart which had only to be shown what was good to embrace it.

Fisher was all he had said; extremely poor. His salary as assistant, was handsome, nevertheless. He received one hundred a year and his board from the gentleman with whom he was; but his dress, which was necessarily rather expensive, and his mother, who had only an annuity of twelve pounds a year, consumed it all. Still you see he was by no means actually starving; and he thought the young wife he was going to bring home would be no very great addition to his expenses, and he trusted, if children came, that he should, by his exertions, be able to provide for them. In two years his engagement with the present gentleman as his assistant would be at an end; and he had received from the old man, who was a sort of humorist in his way, several very strong hints about partnership, if he would be satisfied with a reasonable share. Partnership would, in the course of time, he knew, become sole proprietorship, at the death or retirement of his aged patron—one of which events could not be very far distant.

It was, therefore, with great satisfaction, after having summoned the necessary attendance, and sent his young betrothed to rest, that Fisher walked home on a fine fresh morning.

It was true he had taken a step most people would call very imprudent, thus to encumber himself with a young wife at the very outset of his career; certainly, he had never intended any such thing. He had always resolved to be patient, and have a little store of money by him, before he persuaded anyone to begin the world with him. He could not bear the idea of all being dependent upon his own life, and risking the chance of leaving a widow and a young family destitute. But this was an exceptional case, for he could not, without trembling, contemplate the dangers which surrounded this young and innocent girl. His medical knowledge taught him but too well the perils to the health of one so fresh and blooming, from labors in close rooms to which she was so little accustomed—death stared her in the face, unless she escaped it by means at which he shuddered to think.

The only way in which he, young as he was, could possibly help her, was to withdraw her from the dangerous scene and make her his wife; and on that step he had been for some days resolving. The emotion she had shown, the timorous joy, the sweet confidence in his love and honor, had given a rapturous feeling of happiness to him quite new. He had intended benevolently and kindly; he had met with all the blessings of sincere attachment.

Instead of walking to Mrs. Stedman's to take some rest, which he very much needed, he went to his mother's house, or rather the house where he had taken a snug little apartment for his mother.

It lay somewhere out Brompton way; in which district neat rows of small houses are to be found looking backward upon pleasant greens and gardens. There he had found a modest little suite of apartments; one sitting-room and two bedrooms—a room for his mother, and another sometimes occupied by himself.

The little hut, a tiny place it was, was clean to the greatest nicety, and though fitted up in the very simplest and cheapest manner, had an air of perfect comfort. The walls were stained green, the drugget upon the floor was pink and fawn; the chairs were covered with what used to be called Manchester stripe—very clean and pleasant-looking, and excellent for wash and wear. There was a pretty little table for tea and dinner, and a nice, round three-clawed one close by the mother's side—who was established in the only article of luxury in the room, a very comfortable arm-chair. There the old lady passed her life.

She had lost the use of her lower limbs for some years; but her health of body and mind in other respects was sound. The only thing for which the son had as yet *coveted* a little more money, had been that he might possess the means to give his mother the enjoyment of exercise and air; and when he passed young men, the very picture of health and strength, lounging idly in their carriages, as one sometimes does in the Park, though not given to such nonsense, he could not help uttering a secret exclamation against the inequalities of fortune, and thinking the blindness of the goddess of the wheel no fable.

They were but passing thoughts these, such as the best have when they languish for the means of bestowing good.

Such indulgences, however, were rarely to be thought of, though now and then he managed to obtain them; but as the best compensation he could make, he paid a few guineas a year more for the pretty apartment, of which the back room, elongated into a little bow-window, formed the sitting-room—what would have been the front sitting-room being divided into the two bedrooms. The pleasant bow-window looked over a row of gardens belonging to the neighboring houses, and these to a considerable tract of nursery-ground filled with rows of fruit-trees, and all the cheerful pleasant objects to be seen in such places. In summer the arm-chair was wheeled to the window, and the whole of the view was disclosed to the old lady; in winter it was returned to the fire; but even there she did not lose her pretty view altogether, the room was so little that from her place she might easily command it. Miss Martineau, in a book of hers, has given us a most valuable and interesting account of the way in which, during a tedious and most trying illness, her active spirit confined to one place, she used to amuse herself, and while away the time by looking out of her window through her telescope, and watching all that was going on. This old lady did much the same, minus the good telescope, which she had not. Her son, however, had presented her with an old-fashioned opera-glass, which he had picked up at some second-hand retailer or other, and as it was a good one, and, moreover, very light to the hand, it did as well for her, and better.

In some things the old lady had a little resemblance to Miss Martineau. She had the same cheerful activity of mind, the same readiness of adapting herself to circumstances—things in a great measure constitutional. She was, moreover, a very shrewd, sensible woman, and deeply pious—pious in the most excellent way; really, vitally, seriously. She came of a good old puritan stock, where piety had been cherished from generation to generation. Some physiologists say, that even the acquired moral qualities and habits descend to the succeeding generation. It is possible an aptness for good or evil may be, and often is, inherited from those who have gone before. It would seem to have been so in this case. The pious father and mother, children of as pious parents, had left this pious daughter—and her excellencies had descended in accumulated measure to her son. This old lady had been sorely tried—death and poverty had done their worst—except in as far as the cruel ravager had spared her this one boy, one of many children, all followed the delicate, consumptive man who had been their father. She had borne it all. Strong in faith, she had surrendered her treasures to the Lord of Life, in trust that they should be found again when he maketh up his jewels. Cheerful as was her temper, life's course had been too rough with her, for her to value it very much, when those lovely, promising buds, but half disclosed, were one after the other gathered. But she had escaped the racking agony of the loving, but

too faithless mother—when all the sweets of nature in its abundance flow around her, and *they* are not there to enjoy.

“When suns shine bright o’er heaven’s blue vault serene,
Birds sing in trees, and sweet flowers deck the plain,
Weep I for thee, who in the cold, cold grave
Sleep, and all nature’s harmony is vain.
But when dark clouds and threat’ning storms arise,
And doubt and fear my trembling soul invade;
My heart one comfort owns, *thou* art not here;
Safe slumbering, in the earth’s kind bosom laid.”

She was happier far than the author of these lines.

She looked upward; she almost saw those she had lost, the objects of a glorious resurrection—already living in the ineffable presence of the God whom they had so faithfully endeavored to serve.

I need not tell you, after this, that her spirits were subdued to a holy calmness and composure.

Her life had been one of the most active endeavors after usefulness. The good she had managed to do can scarcely be calculated. Grains of sand they might be, these hoarded minutes, but it was golden sand; the heap accumulated was large and precious, at the end of sixty-five years.

What money she had possessed she had expended courageously in giving a professional education to her son. Her little annuity of twelve pounds a year was all she had saved for herself. Upon that she believed with her own exertions, she could manage to exist till her son was able to support both; but she had been struck down earlier than she calculated upon. She had at this time lost the use of her lower limbs altogether, and was visited with such trembling in her hands, that she was obliged to close the task abruptly, and to sit down dependent upon her son before she had expected it.

It had been very trying work till he obtained his present situation, and he still felt very poor, because he was resolved every year to lay twenty pounds or so by, that, in case anything should happen to him, his mother might have some little addition to her means provided. He was rather strangely provident for the case of his own death; so young man as he was; perhaps he felt the faltering spring of life within, which he had inherited from his father.

Three years the mother and son had thus lived together, and Fisher was master of sixty pounds.

He had never allowed himself to cast a thought upon marriage, though of a temper ardently to desire, and rapturously to enjoy, domestic felicity. He said to himself he must first provide for his mother’s independence, and then think about his own happiness. But the accident which had brought him and Lucy together had produced other thoughts—thoughts which he had, but the very day before the nursing so suddenly closed, communicated to his mother, and she had said:

“I think you are quite right, John. Imprudent marriages are, in most cases, very wrong things—a mere tempting of Providence; and, that no blessing follows such tempting, we know from the best authority; but this is a most pious, benevolent, and very rational attempt to save a fellow-creature upon the brink of destruction, and I think it would be a want of faith, as well as a want of common humanity, in either of us to hesitate; I am very glad she seems such a sweet, innocent, pretty creature, for your sake, my darling John; I hope she will bring a blessing into your dwelling and repay you for your goodness to me; I am sorry she must come and live with your old mother, for young wives don’t like that—but I promise you I will do my very best to be as amiable as an old woman can; and, moreover, I will neither be cross or disappointed if she is not always as amiable as a young woman ought to be. Will that do? Yes, yes; fetch her away from that sink of iniquity, and we’ll all get along somehow or other, never fear.”

And so Lucy Miles, blushing like a rose, and, as her young and delighted husband thought, more beautiful than an angel of light, was in a few

weeks married to John Fisher, and she went home to the old lady.

“Amid the smoke of cities did you pass
The time of early youth, and there you learnt
From years of quiet industry to love
The living being of your own fireside.”

The eloquent tongue of Fisher had over and over again related with deep feeling the history of all he owed to his mother, and Lucy, far from feeling inclined to be jealous of the devoted affection he felt for her, like a good loving girl as she was, extended the ardent attachment she felt toward her husband to everything that belonged to him.

She had lost her own parents, whom she had loved exceedingly, though they were quite ordinary people. She soon almost worshiped old Mrs. Fisher.

Lucy had been little improved by those who had the rearing of her; she was a girl of excellent disposition, but her education had been commonplace. In the society of the old lady her good gifts, both of head and heart, expanded rapidly. The passionate desire she felt to render herself worthy of her husband whom she adored almost as some superior being, made her an apt and docile pupil.

A few years thus spent, and you would scarcely have known her again. Her piety was deep, and had become a habit—a part of her very soul; her understanding naturally excellent, had been developed and strengthened; the most earnest desire to perform her part well—to do good and extend virtue and happiness, and to sweeten the lives of all with whom she had to do, had succeeded to thoughtless good nature, and a sort of instinctive kindness. Anxiety for her husband’s health, which constantly oppressed her, a sort of trembling fear that she should be bereaved early of this transcendent being; this it was, perhaps, which enhanced the earnest, serious tone of one so young.

She was extremely industrious, in the hope of adding to her husband’s means of rest and recreation, and the accidental acquaintance with a French *modiste*, who had fallen ill in London, was in great distress, and whom Fisher attended through charity, had put her into the way of improving herself in this art more than she could have done even in that eminent school, the work-room of Miss Lavington. The French woman was a very amiable and pious person, too. She was a French Protestant. The connection ripened into friendship, and it ended by placing Mrs. Fisher in the state of life in which we find her. Fisher fell desperately ill in consequence of a fever brought on at a dissection, from which he narrowly escaped with life; the fever left him helpless and incapable of exertion. The poor mother was by this time dead; he succeeded to the vacant arm-chair. Then his wife resolved upon doing that openly which she had till now done covertly, merely working for the bazaars. She persuaded her husband when a return to his profession appeared hopeless, to let her employ his savings in setting up business with Madame Noel, and from small beginnings had reached that high place in her profession which she now occupied.

No sooner had Mrs. Fisher established a working-room of her own, and engaged several young women to labor under her superintendence, than the attention of her husband was seriously turned to the subject of those evils from which he had rescued his wife.

She had suffered much, and experienced several of the evils consequent upon the manner such places were managed; but she would probably not have reflected upon the causes of these evils, nor interested herself so deeply as she afterward did in applying the remedies, if it had not been for the promptings of this excellent man.

His medical skill made him thoroughly aware of the injurious effect produced upon the health by the ill-regulated system of such establishments; and his thoughts, as he sat resigned to helplessness in his arm-chair, were seriously directed to that subject.

In consequence of his suggestions it was that Mrs. Fisher began her life of business upon a plan of her own, to which she steadily adhered. At first she found considerable difficulty in carrying it out—there are always numerous obstructions to be met with in establishing any improvements; but where the object is rational and benevolent, per-

severance and a determined will triumph over every difficulty.

The first thing Fisher insisted upon was ventilation; the second, warmth; the third, plenty of good, wholesome, and palatable food; the fourth, exercise. He determined upon a house being selected which was not closely built up behind, and that the room in which the young ladies worked should be large and commodious in proportion to the inmates. A portion of the little money he had saved was sacrificed to the additional expense thus incurred. He looked upon it, he told his wife, as given to charity, for which she must expect no return, and for which he should look for no interest. A good wide grate, which should be well supplied with a cheerful fire in winter, was to assist the ventilation proceeding from a scientific plan of his own, which kept the room constantly supplied with a change of air; and under the table at which the girls sat at work, there was in winter a sort of long, square wooden pipe filled with hot water, and covered with carpeting, upon which they could put their feet; the extreme coldness of the feet arising from want of circulation, being one of the causes to which Fisher attributed many of the maladies incident to this mode of life.

The next object of attention was the table. Fisher had been at school, at one or two different schools, resembling each other in one thing only—the scandalous—I must use the strong and offensive word—the scandalous neglect or worse than neglect—the infamous and base calculations upon the subject of food which pervaded the system of those schools, and which pervaded, I am sorry to say, so many of the schools with which he had chanced to be acquainted. In the course of his practice as a medical man, his opportunities for observation had been above the common.

In fine ladies’ schools, I cannot assert that the shameful economy of buying inferior provisions, and the shameful indifference as to how they were cooked, which prevail in so many boys’ schools, were to be found—but a fault almost equally great prevailed too generally. There was enough. These growing girls, stimulated to most unnatural exertions both of body and mind, peculiarly unnatural to growing girls who require so much care, fresh air, exercise, and rest, for their due development—these young things had very rarely nearly so much to eat as they could have eaten.

Sometimes enough was literally not set before them; at others, a sort of fashion in the school to consider a good appetite as a proof of coarseness, greediness, and vulgarity, worked but too effectually upon these sensitive creatures. A girl at that age would rather be starved than sneered at or ridiculed for eating.

But in boys’ schools, expensive boys’ schools too, where six times as much was paid for a boy’s board as would have boarded him, either through scandalous parsimony, or the most in excusable negligence, he had seen meat brought into the house not fit to eat; cheap and bad in itself, but rendered doubly unwholesome in summer by the most utter carelessness as to whether it was fresh. Boys are hardy things, and it is right they should not be accustomed to be too nice; but wholesome, plain roast and boiled is what they pay for and ought to have; and the defrauding them of what is so necessary to health, vigor, and even intellect, in this unprincipled manner, is almost the very worst form of robbery any man can be guilty of.

Fisher was resolved it should not be so in his wife’s house. He and his wife had agreed that the young ladies she employed should be lodged and boarded under her roof, unless they had respectable parents who could and would be fully answerable for them; and they should have a plentiful and a pleasant table—that he was resolved upon. As he was competent to little else, he took this matter upon himself. He calculated what ought fairly to be laid out, and he laid it all out. He would not economize a penny. If he was able to make a good bargain with his butcher, the young ladies, not he, should have the benefit of it all. They should have a bit of fish, or a little poultry, or a little good fruit, poor girls, to vary a meal, to which they could not bring the sturdy appetite of much out-of-door exercise.

Then came the great chapter of that exercise. There was the difficulty—how much time could Mrs. Fisher possibly afford to lose?—to abandon

to this object?—for the work must pay—or it could not continue to be done. But the difficulty diminished upon examination. Time may be counted by strength as well as by minutes. The same thing may, by two different hands, be accomplished in most unequal portions of time.

The dreadful feeling of weariness, which, as Lucy, she so well remembered—one consequence of sitting so long in an unchanged position, and at the same employment—that dreadful feeling could not be forgotten by her. Her horror at the recollection was so strong, that of this matter she thought more than even her benevolent husband.

He recollected to have heard that the Jesuits, those masters of human development, physical as well as intellectual, never suffered a pupil to be employed more than two hours upon the same thing without a change, to get up and turn round the chair, to pace five minutes up and down the room would in many cases suffice. Mr. Fisher laid down his plan.

Two hours the young ladies worked, and then for ten minutes they were allowed to lay down their needles; they might walk about the room, into the passage, up and down stairs, or sit still and lounge. That precious, useful lounge, so fatally denied to the wearied spins of many a growing girl, was here permitted. They might look about them, or close their eyes and be stupefied; in short, do just what they liked.

It was soon found by experience that the work done after this refreshing pause more than made up for the time thus expended.

Such were some of the plans of this kind-hearted and highly-principled man, and the blooming looks, the gay spirits, the bright eyes, of the happy little community did credit to the scheme.

Fisher lived but a few years to carry out the rule he had instituted; but to his wife it was as a sacred legacy from his hand, and during the whole course of her subsequent life she faithfully adhered to it.

Her house was like a convent in some things, but it was a very happy convent. Everything proceeded with a clock-work order, and yet there was a liberty such as few girls thus employed, in spite of their intervals of license, could enjoy.

It was a happy party, over which this remarkably handsome, and now distinguishedly fashionable milliner, and dignified-looking lady presided. Nothing indiscreet and unseemingly was ever permitted. The rule, perhaps, might be a little too grave, and the manner of the young ladies too sedate; but they were innocent and good; and they had their recreations, for Mrs. Fisher took them out, turn and turn about, upon a Sunday, in her carriage, and the others walked with the two superintendents—persons carefully selected for their good principles and good conduct.

Mrs. Fisher, too, was a little bit of a match-maker; and if she had a weakness, it was her fondness for settling her young ladies. Nothing pleased her better than when they were sought, and they were such nice, well-behaved girls, this often happened, by worthy young men in their own rank of life. Mrs. Fisher always gave the wedding-gown and bonnet, and the wedding dinner, and a white satin reticule or bag, drawn with rose-colored ribbons, with a pretty pink and white purse in it, with silver tassels and rings, and containing a nice little sum for the bride's pocket-money. You will easily understand how Mrs. Danvers had struck up quite a friendship with Mrs. Fisher. Once, indeed, in her days of youth and gayety, she had been one of her most valuable customers. She had long done with fine things, but the interest she took in the affairs of Mrs. Fisher's establishment had endeared her very much to that good lady, and hence she had, at her earnest request, consented to take Myra, though her own instinct, the moment she cast her eyes upon this beautiful, dawdling-looking being, had assured her that she was, to use her own phrase, not one of her sort.

Myra was grievously disappointed, upon her side. She was quite one to be blind to the solid advantages of her position, and to look with querulous regret upon all the flashy and brilliant part of such a business, in which she was not allowed to take the least share.

Precisely because she was so beautiful did Mrs. Fisher exclude her from the show-room—that

theatre which was to have been the scene of her triumphs.

The beautiful things she was employed in manufacturing left her hands to be seen no more—and, alas! never by her to be tried on. It was tantalizing work to part with them, and forever, as soon as they left her hand.

Then she was obliged to be punctual to a moment in her hours; a grievous yoke to her who had never been educated to submit to any. To dress with the most careful attention to neatness, though there was "nothing but a pack of women to look at her"—to listen to "a prosy book"—a book, I forgot to say, was read aloud in the work-room—instead of gossiping and having a little fun; and to walk out on Sundays under the wing of that old, hideous harridan, Mrs. Sterling, instead of going with her companions where she pleased. In short, it was worse "than negro slavery," but there was no help for it—there she was, and there she was obliged to stay.

Well, and did she improve under this good discipline? Was she any the better for it? I am sorry to say very little.

There are subjects that are almost unimprovable. She was, by nature, a poor, shallow, weedy thing; her education had been the worst possible for her. Evil habits, false views, low aims, had been imbibed, and not one fault corrected while young; and self-experience, which rectifies in most so much that is wrong, seemed to do nothing for her. There was no substance to work upon. Mrs. Fisher was soon heartily tired of her, and could have regretted her complaisance to Mrs. Danvers' wishes in receiving her against her judgment; but she was too good to send her away. She laughed, and accepted her as a penance for her sins, she said—as a thorn in the flesh—and she let the thorn rankle there. She remembered her honored Fisher, and the scene by the bedside of poor Saunders. She looked upon the endurance of this plague as a fresh offering to the adored memory.

She bore this infliction like a martyr for a long time; at last a smart young tailor fell in love with Myra at church—a place where he had been better employed thinking of other things. And so I believe he thought after he had married her, in spite of the white dress and silk bonnet, and the reticule with pink ribbons, and the bride's pocket-money, which Mrs. Fisher bestowed with more pleasure and alacrity than even she had been known to do upon many a worthier subject.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Yet once more, oh, ye laurels, and once more,
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude.
And with forced fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me."—MILTON'S "Lycidas."

I must beg of you to slip over a portion of time, and to suppose about two years passed over our heads, and we return to Lettice, who has passed that period at General Melwyn's.

So useful, so cheerful, so thoroughly good, so sincerely pious, so generously disinterested she was; and the transformation she had accomplished was astonishing.

And was she as happy herself as she made others? Nobody at the Hazels thought of exactly asking that question. And yet they might have reflected a little, and inquired, whether to one, the source of so much comfort to others, the natural felicity of her age was not denied?

Could a young being like *her* be *very* happy, living with two old people, and without one single companion of her own age? Without prospect, without interest in that coming life, which the young imagination paints in such lovely colors?

One may boldly affirm she was *not* so happy as she deserved to be and that it was quite impossible, with a heart formed for every tender affection as was hers, that she *should*.

She began to be visited by a troublesome guest, which in the days of hardship she had never known. The very ease which surrounded her, the exemption from all necessity for laborious industry actually increasing the evil, gradually seemed to grow upon her. There was a secret distaste for life—a void in the heart, not filled by natural affections—a something which asked for tenderer

relations, more earnest duties—a home—a household—a family of her own!

She blamed herself very much when first this little secret feeling of dissatisfaction and discontent began to steal over her. How could she be so ungrateful? She had every comfort in the world—more, much more, than she had any title to expect; infinitely more than many far more deserving than herself were allowed to enjoy. Why could she not have the same light, contented spirit within her breast, that had carried her triumphantly through so many hardships, and enlivened so many clouded days?

Poor Lettice! It was vain to find fault with herself. Life would seem flat. The mere routine of duties, unsweetened by natural affection, would weary the spirit at times. There was a sweetness wanting to existence—and existence, without that invigorating sweetness, is to the best of us a tedious and an exhausting thing.

So thought Catherine, when, about eighteen months or two years after her marriage, she came for the first time, with Edgar to visit her father and mother.

The regimental duties of the young officer had carried him to the Ionian Islands very shortly after his marriage; promotion had brought him home, and he and his young and happy wife, with a sweet infant of about twelve months old, hastened down to the Hazels to visit Catherine's parents.

I pass over the joy of the meeting—I pass over the satisfaction felt by Catherine at the happy evolution which had taken place—at her father's improved temper, her mother's more tranquil spirits, the absence of Randall, and the general good behavior which pervaded the household.

She looked upon every member of it with satisfaction except one; and that was the very one who ought to have been the happiest, for she was the cause and the origin of all this happiness. But Lettice did not, she thought, look as she used to do; her eyes had lost something of their vivacity, and the good heart of Catherine was grieved.

"It pains me so, Edgar—you can not think, she said to her husband, as she walked, leaning upon his arm, through the pleasant groves and gardens of the Hazels. "I can scarcely enjoy my own happiness for thinking of her. Poor dear, she blames herself so for not being perfectly happy—as if one could have effects without causes—as if the life she leads here could make anyone perfectly happy. Not one thing to enjoy—for as to her comfortable room, and the good house, and the pretty place, and all that sort of thing, a person soon gets used to it, and it shuts out uneasiness, but it does not bring delight, at least to a young thing of that age. Child of the house as I was, and early days as they were with me when you were among us, Edgar—I never knew what true happiness was till then—that is, I should very soon have felt a want of some object of interest, though it *was* my own father and mother."

"So I took the liberty to lay before you, my fair haranguer, if you recollect, when you made so many difficulties about carrying my knapsack."

"Ah! that was because it seemed so heartless, so cruel, to abandon my parents just when they wanted me so exceedingly. But what a debt of gratitude I owe to this dear Lettice for settling all these matters so admirably for me."

"I am glad you confess to a little of that debt, which I, on my part, feel to be enormous."

"I heartily wish there were any means of paying it. I wish I could make Lettice as happy as she has made all of us."

The young officer shook his handsome head.

"Mammas in our rank of life make such a point of endeavoring to settle their daughters—to start them in households of their own—where, if they are exposed to many troubles which they escape under their father's roof, they have many more interests and sources of happiness. But there is nobody to think of such matters as connected with this poor fatherless and motherless girl."

"Mothers, even in your rank, my love, don't always succeed in accomplishing this momentous object. I don't see what possible chance there is for one in Lettice's condition—except the grand one, the effective one—in my opinion almost the only one, namely, the chapter of accidents."

"Ah! that chapter of accidents! 'It is a poor dependence.'"

"Nay, Catherine, that is not said with your usual piety."

"True—I am sorry—and yet, where another's happiness is concerned, one feels as if it were wrong to trust too much—even to Providence; with great reverence be it said—I mean, that in no given event can we exactly tell how much we are expected to use our own exertions, how much diligence on our part is required of us, in order to produce a happy result."

"I agree with you quite and entirely; and if there is a thing that angers me beyond measure, it is to see a pious person fold his hands—sit down and trust the happiness of another to, as he says, Providence. If I have any just idea of Providence, an ample retribution will be in store for these sort of religionists."

"Well, that is just as I feel—but in a sort of confused way. You say those things so much better than I do, Edgar."

"Do I? Well, that is news to me."

"But to return. Cannot we do something for this good creature?"

"I don't exactly see what we can do. Besides, there is your poor mother. Would you pull down all her little edifice of happiness, by taking Lettice away from her?"

"That is a terrible consideration; and yet what was true of me is doubly and trebly true of Lettice. My darling mother would not hear of me relinquishing my happiness upon her account—and ought Lettice to be allowed to make such a sacrifice?"

"Well, well, my dear, it is time enough to begin to deprecate such a sacrifice when the opportunity for it occurs; but I own I see little hope of a romance for your poor, dear Lettice, seeing that an important personage in such matters, namely, a hero, seems to me to be utterly out of the question. There is not a young gentleman within twenty miles, so far as I can see, that is in the least likely to think of the good girl."

"Alas, no! that is the worst of it."

But the romance of Lettice's life was nearer than they imagined.

The visit of Catherine at the Hazels cheered up Lettice very much; and in the delights of a little society with those of her own age, she soon forgot all her quarrels with herself; and brushed away the cobwebs which were gathering over her brain. She was enchanted, too, with the baby, and as she felt that, while Catherine was with her mother, she rather interfered with, than increased Mrs. Melwyn's enjoyment, she used to indulge herself with long walks through the beautiful surrounding country, accompanying the nurse and helping to carry the babe.

She visited several lonely places and remote cottages, where she had never been before; and began to feel a new interest given to existence, when she was privileged to assist others under the pressure of that want and misery which she understood but too well. One evening she and the nurse had strayed in a new direction, and did not exactly know where they were. Very far from the house she was aware it could not be, by the time she had been absent, but they had got into one of those deep, hollow lanes, from which it is impossible to catch a glimpse of the surrounding country; those lanes so still, and so beautiful, with their broken sandy banks, covered with tufts of feathering grass, with peeping primroses and violets, and barren strawberries between; the beech and ash of the copses casting their slender branches across, and checkering the way with innumerable broken lights! While, may be, as was here the case, a long pebbly stream runs sparkling and shining upon one side of the way, forming ten thousand little pools and waterfalls as it courses along.

Charmed with the scene, Lettice could not prevail upon herself to turn back till she had pursued her way a little farther. At last a turn in the lane brought her to a lowly and lonely cottage, which stood in a place where the bank had a little receded, and the ground formed a small grassy semicircle, with the steep banks rising all around it—here stood the cottage.

It was an ancient, picturesque-looking thing, built one knows not when. I have seen one such

near Stony Cross in Hampshire, which the tradition of the country affirms to be the very identical cottage into which the dying William Rufus was carried, and I am half inclined to believe it.

Their deep, heavy roofs, huge roof-trees, little low walls and small windows, speak of habits of life very remote from our own—and look to me as if like a heap of earth—a tumulus—such edifices might stand unchanged for tens of ages.

The cottage before us was of this description, and had probably been a woodman's hut when the surrounding country was all one huge forest. The walls were not more than five feet high, over which hung the deep and heavy roof, covered with moss, and the thatch was overlaid with a heap of black mould, which afforded plentiful nourishment to stone crops, and various tufts of beautifully feathered grass, which waved in fantastic plumes over it. The door, the frame of which was all askant, seemed almost buried in, and pressed down by this roof, placed in which were two of those old windows which show that the roof itself formed the upper chamber of the dwelling. A white rose bush was banded up on one side of this door; a rosemary tree upon the other; a little border with marigolds, lemon, thyme and such like pot-herbs, ran round the house, which lay in a tiny plot of ground carefully cultivated as a garden. Here a very aged man, bent almost double as it would seem with the weight of years, was very languidly digging or attempting it.

The nurse was tired, so was the babe, so was Lettice. They agreed to ask the old man's leave to enter the cottage, and sit down a little, before attempting to return home.

"May we go in, good man, and rest ourselves a little while?" asked Lettice.

"Anan!"

"Will you give us leave to go in and rest ourselves a little? We are both tired with carrying the baby."

"I don't know well what it is you're saying. How many miles to Brainford? Maybe two; but it's a weary while sin' I've been there."

"He can't understand us, nurse, at all. He seems almost stone deaf. Let us knock at the door, and see who's within, for you look ready to drop; and I am so excessively tired I can hardly help you. However, give me your sleeping babe at all events, for you really seem as if you could stand no longer."

She took the child, which had long been fast asleep, went to the cottage door and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice.

Not such a voice as she expected to hear, but a sweet, well-modulated voice, that of a person of education. A man's voice, however, it was. She hesitated a little, upon which some one rose and opened the door, but started back upon seeing a young lady with a child in her arms, looking excessively tired, and as if she could hold up no longer.

"Pray, come in," he said, observing she hesitated, and, retreating back a little as he spoke, showed a small bed not far from the fire, standing in the chimney-place, as it is called. In this bed lay a very aged woman. A large, but very, very ancient Bible lay open upon the bed, and a chair a little pushed back was standing near it. It would seem that the young gentleman had risen from the chair where he to all appearance had been reading the Bible to the bed-ridden old woman. "Pray, come in and sit down," he repeated, holding the door to let Lettice enter. "You look exceedingly tired. The place is very humble but perfectly clean, and poor old Betty Rigby will be very happy to give you leave to enter."

The young man who spoke was dressed in deep black; but as there was a crape band round his hat which lay upon the table, it would seem that he was in mourning, and possibly, therefore, not a clergyman. He was something above the middle height; but his figure was spoiled by its extreme thinness, and a stoop in the shoulder which seemed to be the effect of weakness. His face was very thin, and his cheek perfectly pale; but his features were beautifully proportioned, and his large gray eyes beamed with a subdued and melancholy splendor. There was the fire of fever, and there was that of genius.

The expression of this face was soft and sweet in the extreme, but it was rendered almost painful

by its cast of deep sadness. Lettice looked at him, and was struck by his appearance in a way she had never in her life been before. He was, I believe, as much struck with hers. These unexpected meetings, in totally unexpected places, often produce such sudden and deep impressions. The happier being was moved and interested by the delicacy, the attenuation, the profound sadness of the beautiful countenance before her; the other with the bloom of health, the cheerful, wholesome expression, the character and meaning of the face presented to him, as the young girl stood there holding the sleeping infant in her arms. Certainly though not regularly pretty, she was a very picturesque and pleasing-looking object at that moment.

The old woman from her bed added her invitation to that of the young man.

"Please to walk in, miss. It's a poor place. Please take a chair. Oh, my poor limbs! I've been bed-ridden these half-score years; but pray, sit down and rest yourselves, and welcome. Law! but that's a pretty bairn, ben't it?"

Lettice took the offered chair and sat down, still holding the baby; the nurse occupied the other; the young man continued standing.

"I am afraid we have interrupted you," said Lettice, glancing at the book.

"Oh, pray don't think of it! I am in no hurry to be gone. My time," with a suppressed sigh, "is all my own. I will finish my lecture by-and-by."

"Ay, do, do, that's a good gentleman. Do you know, ma'am, he's been the kindest friend, young as he looks, that ever I or my good man met with. You see we lie here out of the way like; it's a big monstrous parish this, and our parson has a world of work to do. So we gets rather overlooked, though, poor man, I believe he does what he can. I've lived here these ten years, crippled and bed-ridden as you see, but I got along pretty well for some time, for I was a bit of a schollard in my youth; but last winter my eyes took to being bad, and since then I've not been able to read a line. All gets dizzy like. And I was very dull and sore beset that I couldn't even see to read the word of God, and my poor husband, that's the old man as is delving in the garden there, why he has hardly any eyes left in his head. Enough just to potter about like, an' see his way, but he couldn't read a line, and it was never so; and so that blessed young gentleman—law! where is he? Why, I declare, he's gone!"

The young gentleman had, indeed, quietly glided out of the cottage as soon as his *eloque* began.

"That young gentleman—I can say what I like now he is gone—has been so good to us. Many's the half-crown he's given me, and a warm winter coat of his own to my poor rheumatized old man. Oh! he's a blessed one—and then he comes and sits and reads to me of an afternoon for an hour together, because as how one day he called he found me a-crying; for why, I could no longer read the Holy Word—and he says 'Cheer up, Betty, be of good comfort, I'll read it to you daily'—and when I said 'daily, sir—that'll take up too much of your time, I fear'—he sighed a little, and said he'd nothing particular to do with his time."

"Who is he? Does he belong to this neighborhood?"

"No, miss, he's only been here maybe a half-year or so. He came down on a visit to Mr. Hickman, the doctor out there, Brainwood way, and presently he went and lodged at a cottage hard by, to be near Hickman, who's a great name for such complaints as his'n—A-A—I don't know what's the name—but he's very bad, they say, and not able to do anything in the world. Well, he's the best, kindest, Christian young man, you ever see or I ever see. The power of good he does among the poor—poor young fellow—is not to be told or counted—but he's so melancholy like, and so gentle, and so kind, it makes one a'most cry to look at him; that's the worst of it."

"He looks like a clergyman; I could fancy he was in holy orders. Do you know whether he is so or not?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have heard say that he is a parson, but nobody in these parts has ever seen him in a pulpit; but now it strikes me I've heard that he was to be curate to Mr. Thomas, of Briarwood

parish, but he was ta'en bad of his chest or his throat, and never able to speak up like, so it would not do; he cannot at present speak in a church, for his voice sounds so low, so low."

"I wonder we have never met with him, or heard of him before."

"Oh, miss! he's not been in this country very long, and he goes out nowhere but to visit the poor; and tired and weak as he looks, he seems never tired of doing good."

"He looks very pale and thin."

"Ay, doesn't he?" I'm afraid he's but badly; I've heard some say he was in a galloping consumption, others a decline; I don't know, but he seems mighty weak like."

A little more talk went on in the same way, and then Lettice asked the nurse whether she felt rested, as it was time to be returning home, and, giving the poor bed-ridden patient a little money, which was received with abundance of thanks, Lettice left the house.

When she entered the little garden, she saw the young man was not gone; he was leaning pensively against the gate, watching the swinging branches of a magnificent ash tree, which grew upon a green plot by the side of the lane. Beautiful it was as it spread its mighty magnificent head against the deep blue summer sky, and a soft wind gently whispered among its forest of leaves.

Lettice could not help, as she observed the countenance of the young man, who seemed lost in thought, admiring the extraordinary beauty of its expression. Something of the sublime, something of the angelic, which we see in a few remarkable countenances, but usually in those which are spiritualized by mental sufferings, and great physical delicacy.

He started from his reverie as she and the nurse approached, and lifted the latchet of the little wicket to let them pass. And, as he did so, the large, melancholy eye was lighted up with something of a pleasurable expression, as he looked at Lettice, and said:

"A beautiful afternoon. May I venture to ask were you intending to visit that poor bed-ridden creature? I thought by the expression she used that you were not acquainted with her case, and probably had never been in the cottage before. Will you excuse me for saying she is in great necessity?"

"It is the first time I have ever been down this lane, sir, but I assure you it shall not be the last; I will come and see the poor woman again. There are few things I pity so much as the being bed-ridden."

She had walked into the lane. He had quitted the garden too, and continued to walk by her side, talking as he went.

"I hope there is not so much suffering in that state as we are apt to imagine," he said: "at least, I have observed that very poor people are enabled to bear it with wonderful cheerfulness and patience. I believe, to those who have lived a life of hard labor, rest has something acceptable in it, which compensates for many privations—but these old creatures are also miserably poor. The parish cannot allow much, and they are so anxious not to be forced into the house, that they contrive to make a very little do. The poor woman has been for years receiving relief as member of a sick-club; but lately the managers have come to a resolution, that she has been upon the list for such an unexampled length of time, that they cannot afford to go on with the allowance any longer."

"How cruel and unjust?"

"Very sad, as it effects her comforts, poor creature, and certainly not just; yet, as she paid only about three years, and has been receiving an allowance for fifteen, it would be difficult, I fancy, to make the sort of people who manage such clubs see it quite in that light. At all events, we can get her no redress, for she does not belong to this parish, though her husband does; and the club of which she is a member is in a place at some distance, of which the living is sequestered, and there is no one of authority there to whom we can apply. I only take the liberty of entering into these details, madam, in order to convince you that any charity you may extend in this quarter will be particularly well applied."

"I shall be very happy, if I can be of any use," said Lettice, "but I am sorry to say, but little of

my time is at my own disposal—it belongs to another, I cannot call it my own, and my purse is not very ample. But I have more money than time," she added, cheerfully, "at all events. And, if you will be pleased to point out in what way I can best help this poor creature, I shall be very much obliged to you, for I am quite longing for the pleasure of doing a little among the poor. I have been very poor myself; and, besides, I used to visit them so much in my poor father's day."

"I have more time than money," he said, with a gentle but very melancholy smile; "and, therefore, if you will give me leave, I would take the liberty of pointing out to you how you could help this poor woman. If—if I knew"—

"I live with General and Mrs. Melwyn—I am Mrs. Melwyn's *dame de campagne*," said Lettice, with simplicity.

"And I am what ought to be Mr. Thomas's curate," answered he, "but that I am too inefficient to merit the name. General Melwyn's family never attends the parish church, I think."

"No; we go to the chapel of ease at Furnival's Green. It is five miles by the road to the parish church, and that road a very bad one. The general does not like his carriage to go there."

"So I have understood; and, therefore, Mr. Thomas is nearly a stranger, and I perfectly one, to the family, though they are Mr. Thomas's parishioners."

"It seems so strange to me—a clergyman's daughter belonging formerly to a small parish—that every individual in it should not be known to the vicar. It ought not to be so, I think."

"I entirely agree with you. But I believe Mr. Thomas and the general never exactly understood or suited each other."

"I don't know—I never heard."

"I am myself not utterly unknown to every member of the family. I was at school with the young gentleman who married Miss Melwyn. Yet why do I recall it? He has probably forgotten me altogether—and yet, perhaps, not altogether. Possibly he might remember James St. Leger;" and he sighed.

It was a light, suppressed sigh. It seemed to escape him without his observing it.

Lettice felt unusually interested in this conversation, little as there may appear in it to interest anyone; but there was something in the look and tone of the young man that exercised a great power over her imagination. His being of the *cloth*—a clergyman—may account for what may seem rather strange in her entering into conversation with him. She had been brought up to feel profound respect for everyone in holy orders; and, moreover, the habits of her life at one time, when she had sunk to such depths of poverty, had, in a considerable degree, robbed her of the conventional reserve of general society. She had been so used at one time to be accosted and to accost without thinking of the ceremony of an introduction, that she probably forgot the absence of it in the present case, more than another equally discreet girl might have done.

The young man, on his part, seemed under the influence of a strange charm. He continued to walk by her side, but he had ceased to speak. He seemed lost in thought—melancholy thought. It certainly would seem as if the allusion to Edgar's home, and his own school life had roused a host of painful recollections, in which he was for the time absorbed.

So they followed the windings of the deep hollow lane together. Necessarily it would seem, for this lane appeared to defy the proverb and have no turning. But that it had one we know—and to it the little party came at last. A gate led to some fields belonging to the estate of the Hazels—Lettice and the nurse prepared to open it and enter.

"Good-morning, sir," said Lettice, "this is my way; I will strive to do something for the poor woman you recommended to me, and I will mention your recommendation to Mrs. Melwyn."

He started as if suddenly awakened when she spoke; but he only said, "Will you? It will be right and kind. Thank you, in her name." And, with a grave, abstracted sort of salute, he left her, and pursued his way.

Catherine was standing rather anxiously upon the hall-steps, looking round and wondering what

had become of her nurse and her baby, when nurse, baby, and Lettice returned.

"Dear people," she cried, "I am glad you are come back."

She had been, if the truth were told, a good deal fidgeted and frightened, as young mothers are very apt to be, when the baby does not come home at the usual hour. She had suffered a good deal of uneasiness, and felt half inclined to be angry. A great many people with whom I am acquainted would have burst out into a somewhat petulant scold, when the cause for anxiety was at an end, and baby and her party, all safe, appeared quietly walking up the road as if nothing in the world were amiss. The very quiet and tranquillity which proved that they were quite unconscious of having done anything wrong, would have irritated some people more than all the rest. I thought it was very nice of Catherine to be good-humored and content as soon as she saw all was safe, after the irritating anxiety she had just been going through. She, however, ran eagerly down the steps, and her eyes sparkling with impatience, caught her little one in her arms and kissed it very fast and hard. That being the only sign of an impatient spirit which she showed, and, except crying out, "Oh! I am so glad to see you safe back, all of you. Do you know, Lettice, I began to wonder what had become of you?"—not a syllable approaching to reproof passed her lips.

"Dear Mrs. D'Arcy! Dear Catherine! I am afraid we are late. We went too far—we partly lost ourselves. We got into a long, but oh, such a lovely lane! where I never was before; and then we have had a little wee bit of an adventure."

"Adventure! Oh, goodness! I am glad of that. Adventures are so excessively rare in this country. I never met with one in my life, but happening upon Edgar, as the people say, when he was coming from hunting, and the wind had blown off my hat—a wind that blew somebody good, that. Dear, beloved Lettice, I wish to goodness, that I do, an adventure of the like of that might have happened to you."

Lettice colored a little.

"Gracious!" cried Catherine, laughing merrily, and peeping at her under her bonnet, "I declare, you're blushing, Lettice. Your adventure is something akin to my adventure. Have you stumbled upon an unparalleled youth—by mere accident, as I did—and did he, did he pick up your hat?"

"If he had," said Lettice, "I am afraid my face with my hair all blown about it, would not have looked quite so enchanting as yours must have done. No, I did not lose my bonnet."

"Anything else? Your heart, perhaps?"

"Dear Catherine, how can you be so silly."

"Oh, it was such a blessed day when I lost mine!" said Mrs. D'Arcy, gayly. "Such a gain of a loss! that I wish just the same misfortune to befall everyone I love—and I love you dearly, Lettice."

"There must be more than one heart lost, I fancy, to make adventures turn out as well as yours did, Catherine."

"Oh! that's a matter of course in such sort of things. There is always an exchange, where there is love at first sight. But now do tell me, that's a dear girl, what your adventure was."

"I only saw a clergyman reading to a poor woman—or rather, I only saw a clergyman, a Bible, and a poor woman, and thence concluded that he had been reading to her."

"Oh! you tiresome creature. Poor, dear, old Mr. Hughes, I'll be bound. Good old fellow—but such a hum-drum. Nay, Lettice, my dear, don't look shocked and cross. A clergyman may be a very stupid, hum-drum, tiresome fellow, as well as any other man. Don't pretend to deny that."

"I would as lief not hear them called so. But this was not Mr. Hughes."

"Oh, no! I remember now you were not in his parish. If you went down Briarwood Lane far enough, you would be in Briarwood parish. Mr. Thomas, perhaps?"

"No."

"Mr. Thomas's curate. Oh! of course, the curate. Only, I don't think Mr. Thomas keeps one."

"No; I believe not Mr. Thomas's, or anyone else's curate; but a gentleman who says he knew Captain D'Arcy at school."

"Nay, that is too charming. That really is like an adventure."

"Here, Edgar!"

He was crossing the paddock at some little distance.

"Come here for one instant. Do you recollect what I was talking to you about, this very morning? Well, Lettice has met with an adventure, and has stumbled upon an old acquaintance of yours, reading the Bible to an old woman; he was at school with you."

"Well, as there were about five hundred people, more or less, who had that honor—if you mean to know anything about him, Miss Arnold, you must go a little more into detail; and, first and foremost, what is the young gentleman's name?"

"James St. Leger," said Lettice.

A start for answer, and,

"Ha! Indeed! Poor fellow! *he* turned up again. I little thought our paths in life would ever cross more. How strange to unearth him in such a remote corner of the world as Briarwood. Poor fellow! Well, what is he like? and how does he look?"

"Ill and melancholy," said Lettice. "I should say very ill and very melancholy—and with reason I believe; for though he is in holy orders, something is the matter with his throat or his chest, which renders him useless in the pulpit."

"You don't say so. His chest! I hope not. And yet," continued Edgar, as if musing aloud, "I know not. He was one when I knew him, Miss Arnold, so marked out through the vices of others for misery in this world, that I used to think the sooner he went out of it the better for him."

"Ah!" cried Catherine, "there is an interesting history here. Do tell it us, Edgar. Of all your charming talks, what I like almost the best are your reminiscences. He has such a memory, Lettice; and so much penetration into the characters of persons, and the connection of things, that nothing is so delightful as when he will tell some old history of his earlier years. Do, dear Edgar, tell us all about this charming young curate of Briarwood."

"Flatterer! Coaxing flatterer! Don't believe a word she says, Miss Arnold. I am as empty-pated a rattle-skull, as ever was turned raw into one of Her Majesty's regiments—and that's saying a good deal, I can tell you. But this dear creature here loves a bit of romance in her heart. What's o'clock?"

"Oh!" looking at the tiniest of watches, "a full two hours to dinner; and such a day, too, for a story—and just look at that spreading oak with the bench under it, and the deer lying crouching there so sweetly, and the wind just lulling the boughs, as it were, to rest. Here, nurse, bundle the baby away to her nursery. Now, *do*, there's a darling Edgar."

"Why, my love, you are making awful preparation. It is almost as terrible as reading a manuscript to begin a relation, all sitting solemnly upon a bench under a tree together. There is not much to tell, poor fellow; only I did pity him from my heart of hearts."

Catherine had her way, and they sat down under the green leafy canopy of this majestic oak; and she put her arm in her husband's and her hand into that of Lettice, and thus sitting between them, loving and beloved, she listened, the happiest, as she was one of the honestest and best, of heaven's creatures.

"We were both together at a large rough sort of preparatory school," began Edgar, "where there might be above a hundred boys or so. They were mostly, if not entirely, intended for the military profession, and came from parents of all sorts of positions and degrees, and of all sorts of principles, characters, and manners. A very omnium gatherum that school was, and the ways of it were as rough as in any school, I should think, they could possibly be. I was a tall, healthy rebel, when I was sent there, as strong as a little Hercules, and excessively proud of my force and prowess. A bold, daring, cheerful, merry lad, as ever left his mother's apron-string; very sorry to quit the dottingest of mothers, and the happiest of homes, and the pleasantest of fathers; but mighty proud to come out of the *Gymnasium*, and to be a man, as I thought it high time I should, in cloth trousers and jacket, instead of a black velvet coat. In I

plunged, plump headforemost amid the vortex, and was soon in a thousand scrapes and quarrels, battling my way with my fists, and my merry eye; for they used to tell me the merry eye did more for me even than my impudence in fighting everything that would condescend to fight such a youngster. I was soon established, and then I breathed after my victories, and began to look round.

"So long as I had considered the throng about me but in the light of so many adversaries to be beaten by main force, and their rude and insulting ways only as provocative to the fray, I had cared little for their manners or their proceedings, their coarseness and vulgarity, their brutality and their vices. But now, seated in peace upon the eminence to which I had fought my way, I had time to breathe and to observe. I cannot describe to you how shocked, how sickened, how disgusted I became. *Par parenthese*, I will say that it has always been an astonishment to me, how parents so tender as mine could send a frank, honest-hearted, well-meaning little fellow into such a place. But the school had a high reputation. I was then a fourth son, and had to make my way as best I could in the profession chosen for me. So here I came. I was about ten or eleven years old, I must add, in excuse for my parents, though I called myself so young, I felt younger, because this was my first school. To resume. When I had vanquished them, it is not in words to describe how I despised and detested the majority of my school-fellows—for their vulgar pleasures, their offensive habits, their hard, rough, brutal manners, their vicious principles, and their vile, blasphemous impiety. I was a warm lover and a still more ardent hater, and my hatred to most of them exceeded all bounds of reason; but it was just such a straightforward, warm-tempered fellow, is certain to entertain without mitigation in such a case.

"It is a bad element for a boy to be living in. However, I was saved from becoming an utter young monster, by the presence in the school of this very boy, James St. Leger.

"In the bustle and hurry of my early wars, I had taken little heed of, scarcely observed this boy at all. But when the pause came, I noticed him. I noticed him for many reasons. He was tall for his age, slender, and of extremely delicate make, but with limbs of a symmetry and beauty that reminded one of a fine antique statue. His face, too, was extremely beautiful; and there was something in his large, thoughtful, melancholy eyes, that it was impossible ever to look upon and to forget.

"I no sooner observed him at all, than my whole boyish soul seemed knit to him.

"His manner was extremely serious; the expression of his countenance sad to a degree—deeply, intensely sad, I might say; yet through that deep sadness there was a tender sweetness which was to me most interesting. I never shall forget his smile—for laugh he never was heard to do.

"I soon discovered two things, that made me feel more for him than all the rest. One, that he was an extremely well-informed boy, and had received a home education of a very superior order; and the other, that he was most unfortunate, and that his misfortunes had one peculiar ingredient of bitterness in them, namely, that they were of a nature to excite the scorn and contempt of the vulgar herd that surrounded him, rather than to move their rude hearts to sympathy and pity.

"The propensity to good in rough, vulgar, thoughtless human beings, is very apt to show itself in this way—in a sort of contemptuous disgust against vice and folly, and an alienation from those connected with it, however innocent. We must accept it, upon reflection, I suppose as a rude form of good inclination; but I was too young for reflection—too young to make allowances, too young to be equitable. Such conduct appeared to me the most glaring and barbarous injustice, and excited in me a passionate indignation.

"Never did I hear St. Leger taunted, as he often was, with the frailties of his mother or the errors of his father, but my heart was all in a flame—my fist clinched—my cheek burning. Many a fellow have I laid prostrate upon the earth with a sudden blow who dared, in my presence, to chase the color from St. Leger's cheek by

alluding to the subject. There was this remarkable in St. Leger, by the way, that he never colored when his mother's shame or his father's end was alluded to, but went deadly pale.

"The history was a melancholy one of human frailty and is soon told. His mother had been extremely beautiful, his father the possessor of a small independent fortune. They had lived happily together many years, and she had brought him five children; four girls and this boy. I have heard that the father doted with no common passion, in a husband, Catherine—upon the beautiful creature, who was moreover accomplished and clever. She seemed devoted to her children, and had given no common attention to her boy in his early years. Hence his mental accomplishments. The husband was, I suspect, rather her inferior in intellect; and scarcely her equal in refinement and manner, but it's no matter; it would have been probably the same whatever he had been. She who will run astray under one set of circumstances, would probably have run astray under any. She was very vain of her beauty and talents, and had been spoiled by the idolatry and flattery of all who surrounded her.

"I will not pain you by entering into any particulars; in brief, she disgraced herself, and was ruined.

"The rage, the passionate despair, the blind fury of the injured husband, it was said, exceeded all bounds. There was, of course, every sort of public scandal. Legal proceedings and the necessary consequences—a divorce. The wretched history did not even end here. She suffered horribly from shame and despair I have been told, but the shame and despair had not the effect it ought to have produced. She fell from bad to worse, and was utterly lost. The husband did the same. Wild with the stings of wounded affection, blinded with suffering, he flew for refuge to any excitement which would for a moment assuage his agonies; the gaming-table, and excess in drinking, soon finished the dismal story. He shot himself in a paroxysm of delirium tremens, after having lost almost every penny he possessed at faro.

"You tremble, Catherine. Your hand in mine is cold. Oh, the pernicious woman! Oh, the depths of the misery—if I were indeed to tell you all I have met with and known—which are entailed upon the race by the vanity, the folly, and the vice of women. Angels! yes, angels you are. Sweet saint—sweet Catherine, and men fall down and worship you, but woe for them when she they worship proves a fiend.

"Dear Miss Arnold, you are shedding tears, but you would have this dismal story. You had better hear no more of it, let me stop now."

"Go on—pray go on, Edgar. Tell us about the poor boy and the girls, you said there were four of them."

"The boy and his sisters were taken by some relations. It was about a year after these events that I met him at this school. They had sent him here, thinking the army the best place for him. To get him shot off, poor fellow, perhaps, if they could. His four sisters were all then living, and how tenderly, poor lad, he used to talk to me about them. How he would grieve over the treatment they were receiving, with the best intentions he acknowledged, but too hardening and severe he thought for girls so delicate. They wanted a mother's fostering, a father's protection, poor things, but he never alluded in the remotest way to either father or mother. Adam, when he sprung from the earth, was not more parentless than he seemed to consider himself. But he used to talk of a future for his sisters, and sometimes in his more cheerful moods, would picture to himself what he would do when he should be a man, and able to shelter them in a home, however humble, of his own. His whole soul was wrapped up in these girls."

"Did you ever hear what became of them?"

"Three died of consumption, I have been told, just as they were opening into the bloom of early womanhood, almost the loveliest creatures that ever were seen."

"And the fourth?"

"She was the most beautiful of all—a fine, high-spirited, dashing creature. Her brother's secret terror and darling."

"Well?"

"She followed her mother's example, and died miserably at the age of two-and-twenty."

"What can we do for this man?" cried Catherine, when she had recovered voice a little. "Edgar, what can we do for this man?"

"Your first question, dear girl—always your first question—what can be done? Ever, my love, may you preserve that precious habit. My Catherine never sits down lamenting, and wringing her hands helplessly about other people's sorrows. The first thing she asks is, what can be done?"

CHAPTER IX.

Strongest minds
Are often those of whom the noisy world
Hears least: else surely this man had not left
His graces unrevealed and unproclaimed.

—WADSWORTH.

The first thing to be done, it was obvious to all parties, was for Edgar to go and call upon Mr. St. Leger, which he did.

He found him occupying one very small room, which served him for bed and sitting-room, in a small cottage upon the outskirts of the little secluded town of Briarwood. He looked extremely ill; his beautiful countenance was preternaturally pale; his large eyes far too bright and large; his form attenuated; and his voice so faint, husky and low that it was with difficulty he could make himself heard, at least for any length of time together.

The expression of his countenance, however, was rather grave than sad; resigned than melancholy. He was serious but perfectly composed; nay, there was even a chastened cheerfulness in his manner. He looked like one who had accepted the cup presented to him; had already exhausted most of the bitter potion, and was calmly prepared to drain it to the dregs.

And so it had been.

No man was ever more exquisitely constituted to suffer from circumstances so agonizing than he. But his mind was of a lofty stamp; he had not sunk under his sufferings. He had timely considered the reality of these things. He had learned to connect—really, truly, faithfully the trials and sorrows of this world with the retributions of another. He had accepted the part allotted to him in the mysterious scheme; had played it as best he could, and was now prepared for its impending close.

It is consoling to know one thing. In his character of minister of the holy word of God he had been allowed the privilege of attending the last illness of both mother and sister, both so deeply, deeply, yet silently beloved, in spite of all; and, through those blessed means, the full value and mercy of which, perhaps, such greivous sinners are alone able to entirely estimate, he had reconciled them, as he trusted, with that God "who forgiveth all our iniquities and healeth all our diseases." Having been allowed to do this, he felt as if it would be the basest ingratitude to murmur because his services in the pulpit were suddenly arrested by the disease in his chest, and with it a stop put to further usefulness, and even to the supply of his daily bread.

He was calmly expecting to die in the receipt of parish relief, for he had not a penny beyond his curate's salary; and it was impossible to allow Mr. Thomas, who was a poor man himself, to continue that, now the hope of restoration to usefulness seemed at an end. It was not likely, indeed, that he should, upon the spare hermit's diet which his scant means allowed, recover from a complaint of which weakness was the foundation.

He had tried to maintain himself by his pen; but the complaint which prevented his preaching was equally against the position when writing. He could do so little in this way that it would not furnish him with a loaf a week. A ray of genuine pleasure, however, shot to his eye, and a faint but beautiful flush mounted to his cheek, when Edgar entered and cordially held out his hand.

He was such a dear warm-hearted fellow, was Edgar. St. Leger had loved him so entirely at school, and those days were not so very long since! The impression old Time had not even yet attempted with his busy fingers to efface.

"I am so glad to have found you out, my dear fellow," Edgar began. "Who would have thought of meeting you, of all people in the world, here, ensconced in such a quiet nook of this busy island—

a place where the noise and bustle and stir of the Great Babylon cannot even be heard. But what are you doing in this place? for you look ill, I must say, and you seem to be left to yourself without a human being to look after you."

"Much so. You know I am quite alone in the world."

"A dismal position that, and I am come to put an end to it. My wife insists upon making your acquaintance, and scuttled me off this morning without giving me time to eat my breakfast, though, to own the truth, I was ready enough of myself to set out. The general desired me to bring his card; he is too infirm to go out himself, and he and Mrs. Melwyn request the favor of your company to dinner to-morrow at six o'clock."

"I should be very happy—but—" and he hesitated a little.

"I'll come and fetch you in the dog-cart about five, and drive you down again in the evening. It's a mere step by Hatherway Lane, which is quite passable at this time of the year, whatever it may be in winter."

St. Leger looked as if he should like very much to come. His was a heart, indeed, formed for society, friendship, and love; not the least of the monk or the hermit was to be found in his composition. And so it was settled.

St. Leger came to dinner, as arranged, Edgar fetching him up in the dog-cart.

Everyone was struck with his appearance. There was a gentleness and refinement in his manner which charmed Mrs. Melwyn; united to the ease and politeness of a man of the world, equally acceptable to the general; Catherine was delighted; and Lettice only in a little danger of being too well pleased.

His conversation soon showed him to be a man of a very superior turn of thought, and was full of information. In short, it was some time, with the exception of Edgar, since so agreeable a person had sat down at that dinner-table; for the Hazels lay rather out of the way, and neither the general nor Mrs. Melwyn were of a temper to cultivate society.

Edgar returned home in the evening from an agreeable drive with his friend through the bright, glittering starlight night. It was slightly frosty, and he came into the drawing-room rubbing his hands, with his cheeks freshened by the air, looking as if he was prepared very much to enjoy the fire.

He found the whole party sitting up, and very amicably discussing the new acquaintance who had pleased them all so much. So Edgar sat down between his wife and her mother, and readily joined in the conversation.

The general, who really was much altered for the better under the good influences of Lettice, had been speaking in high terms of their late guest. And when Edgar came in and sat down in the circle, spreading his hands to the fire, and looking very comfortable, the general, in an amicable tone, began:

"Really, Edgar, we have been saying we are quite obliged to you for introducing to us so agreeable a man as this Mr. St. Leger, of yours. He is quite a find in such a stupid neighborhood as ours, where, during the ten years I have lived in it, I have never met one *resident*"—with an emphasis upon the word, that it might not be supposed to include Edgar himself—"one *resident* whose company I thought worth a brass farthing."

"I am very glad my friend gives satisfaction, sir," said Edgar, cheerfully; "for I believe, poor fellow, he has much more to seek than even yourself, general, in the article of companionship. One cannot think that the society of the worthy Mr. Thomas can afford much of interest to a man like St. Leger. But whatever pleasure you may mutually afford each other will soon be at an end I fear; and I have been beating my brains all the way coming home, to think what must be done."

"Why must the pleasure come so soon to an end, Edgar?" asked Mrs. Melwyn.

"Why, if something can't be done, the poor lad is in a fair way to be starved to death," was the answer.

"Starved to death! How shockingly you do talk, Edgar," cried Mrs. Melwyn. "I wish you would not say such things; you make one quite start. The idea is too horrible; besides, it cannot be true.

People don't starve to death nowadays—at least not in a sort of case like that."

"I don't know, such things do sound as if they couldn't be true, and yet," said Catherine, "they do come very nearly to the truth at times."

"Indeed, do they," said Lettice.

"Starved to death," observed the general, "I take to be merely a poetic exaggeration of yours, captain. But do you mean to say that young man is literally in distressed circumstances?"

"The most urgently distressing circumstances, sir. The fact is, that he inherited nothing from his father but a most scandalous list of debts, which he most honorably sold every fathoming of his own little property to pay—relying for his subsistence upon the small stipend he was to receive from Mr. Thomas. You don't like Mr. Thomas, sir."

"Who would like such a stupid old drone?"

"He's a worthy old fellow, nevertheless. Though his living is a very poor one, he has acted with great liberality to James St. Leger. The poor fellow has lost his voice; you would perceive in conversation how very feeble and uncertain it was. It is utterly powerless in the reading-desk; and yet Mr. Thomas has insisted upon retaining him, paying his salary, and doing all the duty himself. As long as there was any hope of recovery, to this St. Leger most unwillingly submitted; but, now he despairs of ever again being useful, it is plain it can no longer be done."

"And what is to become of him?" exclaimed Lettice.

She knew what it was to be utterly without resource—she knew how possible it was for such things to happen in this world—she knew what it was to be hungry and to want bread, and be without the means of assistance—to be friendless, helpless, and abandoned by all.

"What is to be done?" she cried.

"What is to be done?" said the general, rather testily. "Why, the young fellow must turn his hand to something else. None but a fool starves."

"Ay, but," said Edgar, shaking his head, "but what is that something? I see no prospect for one incapacitated by his cloth for enlisting as a soldier or standing behind a counter, and by his illness for doing anything consistent with his profession."

"I should think he might write a canting book," said the general, with a sneer; "that would be sure to sell."

"Whatever book St. Leger wrote," Edgar answered coldly, "would be a good one, canting or not. But he cannot write a book. The fatigue, the stooping, would be intolerable to his chest in its present irritable state. Besides, if he did write a book, it's a hundred to one whether he got anything for it, and, moreover, the book is not written; and there is an old proverb which says, while the grass grows the horse starves. He literally will starve, if some expedient cannot be hit upon."

"And that is too, too dreadful to think of," cried Mrs. Melwyn, piteously. "Oh, general!"

"Oh, papa! oh, Edgar! Can you think of nothing?" added Catherine, in the same tone.

"It would be a pity he should starve, for he is a remarkably gentleman-like, agreeable fellow," observed the general. "Edgar, do you know what was meant by the term one meets with in old books about manners, of 'led captain?' I wish to heaven I could have a led captain like that."

"Oh, there was the chaplain as well as the led captain in those days, papa," said Catherine, readily. "Dearest papa, if one could but persuade you you wanted a domestic chaplain."

"Well, and what did the chaplain do in those days, Mrs. Pert?"

"Why, he sat at the bottom of the table, and carved the sirloin."

"And he read, and played at backgammon—when he was wanted, I believe," put in Edgar.

"And he did a great deal more," added Catherine in a graver tone. "He kept the accounts, and looked after important business for his patron."

"And visited the poor and was the almoner and their friend," said Lettice, in a low tone.

"And played at bowls, and drank"—

Catherine put her hand playfully over the general's mouth.

"Don't, dear papa—you must not—you must not, indeed. Do you know this irreverence in speaking of the members of so sacred a profession is not

at all what ought to be done. Don't, Edgar. Dear papa, I may be foolish, but I do so dislike it."

"Well, well, well—anything for a quiet life."

"But to resume the subject," locking her arm in his, and smiling with a sweetness which no one, far least he, could resist. "Really and seriously I do think it would be an excellent thing if you would ask Mr. St. Leger to be your domestic chaplain."

"Stuff and nonsense."

"Not such stuff and nonsense as you think. Here's our darling Lettice—think what a comfort she has been to mamma, and think what a pleasant thing it would be for you to have a confidential and an agreeable friend at your elbow—just as mamma has in Lettice. Hide your face, Lettice, if you can't bear to be praised a little before it; but I will have it done, for I see you don't like it. But, papa, you see things are getting a good deal into disorder, they say, upon your property out of doors, just for want of some one to look after them. I verily believe, that if we could persuade this young gentleman to come and do this for you, he would save you a vast deal of money."

The general made no answer. He sank back in his chair, and seemed to meditate. At last, turning to Edgar, he said:

"That little wife of yours is really not such a fool as some might suppose her to be, captain."

"Really?"

"What say you, Mrs. Melwyn? Is there any sense in the young lady's suggestion, or is there not? What says Miss Arnold? Come, let us put it to the vote."

Mrs. Melwyn smiled. Catherine applauded and laughed, and kissed her father, and declared he was the dearest piece of reasonableness in the world. And, in short, the project was discussed, and one said this, and the other said that, and after it had been talked over and commented upon, with a hint from one quarter, and a suggestion from another, and so on, it began to take a very feasible and inviting shape.

Nothing could be more true than a person of this description in the family was terribly wanted. The general was becoming every day less able and less inclined to look after his own affairs. Things were mismanaged, and he was robbed in the most notorious and unblushing manner. This must be seen to. Of this Edgar and Catherine had been upon their return speedily aware. The difficulty was how to get it done; and whom to trust in their absence; which would soon, owing to the calls of the service, take place again, and for an indefinite period of time.

Mr. St. Leger seemed the very person for such an office, could he be persuaded to undertake it; and his extremity was such, that, however little agreeable to such a man the proposal might be, it appeared not impossible that he might entertain it. Then he had made himself so much favor with the general, that one difficulty, and the greatest, was already overcome.

Mrs. Melwyn seconded their designs with her most fervent wishes. She could not venture to do much more.

To have expressed her sentiments upon the subject—to have said how much she felt the necessity of some such plan, and how ardently she desired that it might be carried into execution, would have been one very likely reason for setting her wayward old partner against it.

She had found so much happiness in the possession of Lettice as a friend, that she anticipated every possible advantage from a similar arrangement for the general.

You may remark as you go along, that it was because Lettice had so admirably performed her own part, that the whole family were so desirous of repeating it under other circumstances. Such are among the incidental—if I may call them so—fruits of good conduct.

If the vices spread wide their devastating influences—the virtues extend their blessings a thousand fold.

The general did not want for observation. He had estimated the good which had arisen from the admission of Lettice Arnold into his family, and he felt well inclined to the scheme of having a companion of his own. He could even tolerate the idea of a species of domestic chaplain; provided

the personage so designated would look to his home farm and keep his accounts.

The proposal was made to Mr. St. Leger.

He hesitated. Edgar expected that he would.

"I do not know," he said. "I feel as if I were, in some measure, running the risk of degrading my holy office, by accepting, merely for my personal convenience, a dependent position, where certain compliances, as a necessary condition, might be expected, which are contrary to my views of things."

"Why so? I assure you, upon my honor, nothing of that sort is to be apprehended. These are really very well meaning people, and you may serve them more than you seem aware. The part of domestic chaplain is not held beneath the members of your church. I own this is not a noble family, and doubt whether you can legitimately claim the title. Yet the office is the same."

"Yes, if I may perform the duties of that office. On that condition alone, will I entertain the thought of it for a moment. And I must add, that as soon as ever I am in a condition, if that time ever arrives, to resume my public duties, I am to be allowed to do so."

"Unquestionably."

"And, that while I reside under the general's roof, I may carry out certain reforms which I believe to be greatly wanted."

"No doubt."

"And that I shall be enabled to assist Mr. Thomas in the care of this extremity of his large parish, which so deplorably requires looking after."

The general grumbled a little at some of these conditions, but finally consented to all.

He was getting an old man. Perhaps he was not sorry, though he thought it due to those ancient prejudices of his profession, I am happy to say now fast growing obsolete to appear so, perhaps he was not really sorry, now the wheel was beginning to pause at the cistern, and the darkness of age was closing around him, to have some one in his household to call his attention to things which he began to feel had been neglected too long.

Perhaps he was not sorry to allow family prayer in a mansion, where the voice of united family prayer had, till then, never been heard. To anticipate a little, I may add, as certain, that he, who began with never attending at all, was known to drop in once or twice; and ended by scolding Lettice heartily in a morning if there was any danger of her not having bound up his arm in time for him to be present.

His gray venerable head, his broken, but still manly figure, his wrinkled face, his still keen blue eye, might be seen at last amid his household. The eye fixed in a sort of determined attention, the lips muttering the prayer, a sort of child in religion still, yet far to seek in many things; but accepted, we will hope, as a child.

He could share, too, as afterward appeared, in the interest which Mrs. Melwyn and Lettice, after Mr. St. Leger's arrival, ventured openly to take in the concerns of the poor; and even in the establishment of a school, against which, with an obstinate prejudice against the education of the lower classes, the general had so long decidedly set his face.

In short, having accepted all the conditions upon which alone St. Leger, even in the extremity of his need, could be persuaded to accept a place in his family, the old soldier ended by taking great comfort, great interest, great pleasure, in all the improvements that were effected.

One difficulty presented itself in making the arrangement; and this came from a quarter quite unexpected by Catherine, from poor Mrs. Melwyn.

"Ah, Catherine," said she, coming into her room, and looking most nervous and distressed, "take care what you and Edgar are about, in bringing this Mr. St. Leger into the family. Suppose he should fall in love with Lettice?"

"Well, mamma, suppose he should, where would be the dreadful harm of that?" said Catherine, laughing.

"Ah, my dear! Pray, don't laugh, Catherine. What would become of us all?"

"Why, what would become of you all?"

"I'm sure I don't wish to be selfish. I should

hate myself if I were. But what could we do without Lettice? Dear Catherine! only think of it. And that would not be the worst. They could not marry, for they would have nothing to live upon if they left us, so they would both be miserable. For they could neither go nor stay. It would be impossible for them to go on living together here, if they were attached to each other, and could never be married. And so miserable as they would be, Catherine, it makes me wretched to think of it."

"Ah! dear, sweet mother, don't take up wretchedness at interest, that's my own mother. They're not going to fall in love. Mr. St. Leger looks not the least inclined that way."

"Ah, that's easily said, but suppose they did?"

"Well, suppose they did. I see no great harm in it; may I confess to you, mother, for my part, I should be secretly quite glad of it."

"Oh, Catherine! how can you talk so? What would be done?"

"Done! Why, let them marry to be sure, and live on here."

"Live on here! Who on earth ever heard of such a scheme! Dearest child, you are too romantic. You are almost absurd, my sweet Catherine, forgive your poor mother for saying so."

"No, that I won't," kissing her with that playful tenderness which so well became her, "that I won't, naughty mamma. Because, do you know, you say the most unjust thing in the world when you call me romantic. Why, only ask papa, ask Edgar, ask Mrs. Danvers, ask anybody, if I am not common-sense personified."

"If I asked your papa, my dear girl, he would only say you had a way of persuading one into anything, even into believing you had more head than heart, my own darling," said the fond mother, her pale cheek glowing, and those soft eyes swimming in delight, as she looked upon her daughter.

"That's right; and now you have acknowledged so much, my blessed mother, I am going to sit down by you, and seriously to give you my well-weighed opinions upon this most weighty matter." So Catherine drew a low stool, and sat, too, down by her mother's knee, and threw her arm over her lap, and looked up in her face and began her discourse.

"First of all, then, dearest mamma, I think you a little take up anxiety at interest in this case. I really never did see a man that seemed to me less likely to fall in love imprudently than this Mr. St. Leger. He is so extremely grave and sedate, so serious, and so melancholy, and he seems so completely to have done with this world—it has, indeed, proved a bitter world to him—and to have so entirely placed his thoughts upon another, that I think the probability very remote indeed, if to the shadow of anything above a possibility it amounts, of his ever taking sufficient interest in present things to turn his thoughts upon his own happiness. He seems absorbed in the performance of the duties to which he has devoted himself. Secondly, this being my idea of the state of the case, I have not the slightest apprehension in the world for dear Lettice's happiness; because I know what a sensible, kind, and what a well-regulated heart hers is, and that she is far too good and right-minded to attach herself in any way beyond mere benevolence, and friendship, and so forth, where there was not a prospect of an adequate return."

"Oh, yes! my love, very true; yet, Catherine, you admit the possibility, however remote, of what I fear. And then what would become of us all? Surely, it is not right to shut our eyes to this possibility."

"Why, mamma, I don't deny the possibility you speak of, and I quite see how wrong it would be to shut our eyes to it; but just listen to me, dearest mother, and don't call me wild and romantic till you have heard me out."

"Well, my love, go on; I am all attention."

"I should think it really the most ridiculous thing in the world," and she laughed a little to herself, "to enter so seriously into this matter, if Edgar and I, alas! were not ordered away in so short a time, and I fear my dearest mamma will be anxious and uncomfortable after I am gone—about this possibility, if we do not settle plans a little, and agree what ought, and what could be done, supposing this horrible contingency to arise."

"How well you understand your poor mother, love! Yes, that is just it. Only let me have the

worst placed steadily before my eyes, and the remedies, if any, proposed, or if none, the state of the case acknowledged, and I can bear the contemplation of almost anything. I think it is not patience, but courage, that your poor mother wants, my child. Uncertainty, anything that is vague, the evils of which are undefined, seems to swell into such terrific magnitude. I am like a poor frightened child, Catherine; the glimmering twilight is full of monstrous spectres to me."

"Yes, mamma, I believe that is a good deal the case with most of us; but more especially with those who have so much sensibility and such delicate nerves as you have. How I adore you, dear mother, for the patient sweetness with which you bear that trying sort of constitution."

"Dear child!"

"Well, then, mother, to look this evil steadily in the face, as you say. Suppose Lettice and Mr. St. Leger were to form an attachment for each other, what should hinder them from marrying?"

"Ah, my dear, that was what I said before, what would become of them? They must starve."

"Why so? why not live on here?"

"Nay, Catherine, you made me promise not to call you romantic, but who ever heard of such an out-of-the-way scheme: a young married couple, living in the condition of domestic companions to people, and in another man's house? Utterly impossible; what nobody ever attempted to do; utterly out of the question."

"Well, mamma, I, for one, think that a great many rather out-of-the-way plans, which, nevertheless, might make people very happy, are often rejected, merely because 'nobody ever heard of such a thing,' or 'nobody ever thought of doing so, and therefore it is utterly impossible.' But I think I have observed that those who, in their own private arrangements, have had the courage, upon well-considered grounds—mind, I say upon well-considered grounds—to overlook the consideration of nobody ever having thought of doing such a thing before—have found their account in it, and a vast deal of happiness has been secured which would otherwise have been quite lost."

"As how, Catherine? Give me instances, I don't quite follow you."

"Why, in marriages, for instance, then, such cases arise very often. Late marriages, for one, between people quite advanced in years, which the world often laughs and sneers at—most wrongly, in my opinion; for, through them, how often do we see what would otherwise have been a solitary old age, rendered cheerful and comfortable; and sometimes a weary, disappointed life, consoled by a sweet friendship and affection at its close. Then there are marriages founded upon reason and arrangement; such as when an ugly man with an ungraceful manner, yet perhaps a good heart and head, and with it plenty of money, marries one rather his inferior in social rank, whom his circumstances enable him to indulge with many new sources of enjoyment, and who in return is grateful for the elevation, and proud of a husband young ladies of his own class might have looked down upon. Then there might be another arrangement, which is, indeed, at present, I own, almost a romance, it is so rarely entered into. I mean, supposing single women from different families, somewhat advanced in life, were to put their little fortunes together, and form a household, wherein, by their united means, they might live easily—instead of almost in penury alone. In short, the instances are innumerable, in which, I think, the path a little out of the ordinary course, is the wisest a person can pursue."

"Go on, my love, you talk so prettily, I like to hear you."

The daughter kissed the soft white hand she held in hers—white it was as the fairest wax, and still most beautiful. The signs of age were only discernible in the wasting blue veins having become a little too obvious.

"Well, then, mamma, to draw my inference, I think, under the peculiar circumstances of our family, you, who are in want of children and companions, could not do better, than if these two valuable creatures did attach themselves to one another, to let them marry and retain them as long as they were so minded under your roof."

"My goodness, child!"

"I have planned it all. This house is so big, I should allot them an apartment at the east end of it. Quite away from the drawing-room and yours and my father's rooms—where they might feel as much at home as it is possible for people to feel in another man's house. I should increase their salary—by opening a policy upon their lives; as a provision for their children if they had any. A large provision of this sort would not be needed. It is not to be supposed their children would not have to earn their own living as their parents had done before them. Why should they not? *Nota bene*—Edgar and I hold that the old rage for making children independent, as it is called—that is, enabling them just to exist, doing nothing, so as just to keep them from starving upon a minimum income, is a very foolish thing among those whose habits of life render no such independence necessary, and who have never thought of enjoying this exemption from labor in their own case."

"But, your father! And then, suppose they got tired of the plan, and longed for a house of their own?"

"My father is much more easily persuaded to what is good for him, than we used to think, dear mother. See how nice he has been about Lettice and this Mr. St. Leger. As to their wishing at last for a home of their own, that is possible I allow; but think, sweetest mother, of the pleasure of rewarding this dear, good girl, by making her happy. As for the rest, fear not, mamma. God will provide."

Mrs. Melwyn made no answer. But she listened more comfortably. The nervous, anxious, harrassed expression of the face, which Catherine knew but too well, began to compose, and her countenance to resume its sweet and tranquil smile.

"Mind, dear mamma, after all I am only speaking of the remote possibility, and what might be done. You would have such pleasure in carrying out the scheme. Oh! I do wish there was but a chance of it, really I can't help it, mamma, it would be so nice;" said the sanguine, kind-hearted Catherine.

CHAPTER X.

Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
And fools who came to scoff, remained to pray.

—GOLDSMITH.

ACCORDINGLY, Mr. St. Leger, his objections having been overruled by Edgar, accepted the place offered him in General Melwyn's family.

In old times it would probably have been called, what it literally was, that of domestic chaplain, and the dignity of the name, the defined office, and the authority in the household which it implies, would not have been without their use, but, in spite of the want of these advantages, Mr. St. Leger managed to perform the duties, which, in his opinion, attached to the office, to the satisfaction of everyone.

It had not been without considerable difficulty and hesitation that he had persuaded himself to enter into the plan. He had scruples, as we have seen; and he had, moreover, an almost invincible dislike to anything approaching to family dependence.

The extremity of his circumstances, however, made him, upon a little consideration, feel that the indulgence of these latter-mentioned feelings of pride and delicacy, was not only unreasonable but almost positively wrong. And, as for the scruples connected with his profession, Edgar did not find it difficult to dissipate them.

He set forth, what was in truth the present state of the family at the Hazels, and enlarged upon the very great need there was for the introduction of more religious views than now prevailed. According to a fashion almost universally prevalent when General Melwyn was young, except those of professed religious habits, and who were universally stigmatized as Methodists, family prayer had been utterly neglected in his family. And, notwithstanding the better discipline maintained since the evil star of Randall had sunk beneath the horizon, not the slightest approach to regularity, in this respect, had been as yet made. Mrs. Melwyn was personally pious, though in a timid and unconfiding way, her religion doing little to support and strengthen her mind; but the general, though he did not live, as many of his generation were doing, in the open profession of skepticism, and that contempt

for the Bible, which people brought up when Tom Paine passed for a great genius, used to reckon so clever, yet it was but too probable that he never approached his Creator, in the course of the twenty-four hours in any way; nor had he done so, since he was a child at his mother's knee.

The young captain and his lady were blest with loving, pious, simple dispositions. They loved one another; they delighted in the dear, happy world in which they lived, and in the sweet little creature, their own darling and most precious possession, and they both loved and most gratefully served their God, who had given them all these good things, and loved him with the full warmth of their feeling hearts. They showed their reverence for divine things by every means in their power; and though they were not of those who go about hurling the awful vengeance of God upon all they may think less pious than themselves, they were naturally anxious, and as advancing years brought increase of serious thought, they became more and more anxious that their parents should share the consolations, and their household the moral guidance to be derived from a better system.

Then, as I hinted to you before, in anticipation of this change, there had been a very serious neglect upon the part of this family of all those duties connected with the poor and ignorant. None of those efforts were here made to assist in softening the evils of destitution, or in forwarding the instruction of the young, which almost everybody, nowadays, considers such obvious duties.

Such were some of the considerations urged by Edgar, and to such Mr. St. Leger yielded.

The general was profuse in his offers as regarded salary, and gave Edgar a *carte blanche* upon the matter; but Mr. St. Leger would only accept of one hundred a year, and this, with the stipulation that so soon as the state of his health would enable him, he should be at liberty to undertake the duties belonging to a curate for Mr. Thomas, without diminishing that gentleman's slender stipend by receiving any remuneration from his hands.

This last part of the arrangement was particularly acceptable to Mr. St. Leger, as he thought with the highest satisfaction upon the probability now opening of resuming his clerical duties, and of thus being able to repay the debt of gratitude he felt to be owing to the good vicar.

And now behold Mr. St. Leger introduced as a member of the family at the Hazels, and shedding, on his part, as Lettice had before him done, upon hers, a new set of benign influences upon this household.

He was installed the first day by the general, with much politeness and some little formality, in Edgar's place, at the bottom of the table; that young gentleman having made it his particular request that he might see his friend sitting there before his departure. With due gravity was all this done; while Edgar, chuckling with delight, came and popped down in his place by the side of his wife.

The young stranger looking extremely quiet and composed, without fuss, ceremony or hurry, took the place appointed to him; but, before seating himself, with a serious air, he opened his ministerial functions by saying grace.

Not as the general was wont to say it—for say it he did, more as if making a grimace than even as going through a form—but so impressively and reverently, though very briefly, that the hearts of those about to sit down, were touched, and they were reminded in spite of themselves, as they ought to be reminded, that there is One above all who is the Giver of these good things.

The scene was striking. The very footmen—the officer's footmen—paused, napkin in hand, astonished, awestruck by the service. They stood and stared with vacant eyes, but remained stock still.

That over, the dinner went on as usual. People ate and drank with cheerful enjoyment. They all, indeed, felt particularly warm-hearted and comfortable that day. A sort of genial glow seemed to pervade the little party. The footmen rushed about more light-footed and assiduous than ever; and, be it observed to their credit, they were all, without exception, most particularly attentive to the new-comer.

In the evening, at ten o'clock, the bell rang for prayers.

Mr. St. Leger, be it understood, had not stipulated for obligatory attendance upon this service, only for the right to have candles in the library, and of reading prayers to such as might choose to come; but Mrs. Melwyn had ordered the servants to attend; and she, and Edgar, and Catherine, were also there, leaving poor Lettice to take charge of the general.

The service was short, but impressive, as the grace had been before. It was necessarily very brief, for the voice of the fair and delicate young man, looking, indeed, as we might imagine one of the angels of the churches, figured in Scripture, was so extremely feeble that more he could not do.

But even if he had possessed the power, I question whether much more he would have done, he looked upon impressive brevity as the very soul of such exercises in a family like the present.

Poor Lettice! how hard she found it that evening to remain playing backgammon with the general, when the rest went out of the room. Going to attend those services to which she had been accustomed in the house of her father; and after which, during her stay here, her heart had so often yearned; but it could not be.

She was, however, consoled by a whisper from Catherine, as she came back, passing her upon her way to take her place by the fire.

"To-morrow you go and I stay. We will take it in turns."

The new plans were of course—as what taking place in a family is not—discussed in full conclave that evening over the kitchen fire.

The servants all came back and assembled round it preparatory to washing up and going to bed; for though it was summer and warm weather, what servant in the world does not enjoy the kitchen in the evening, be the weather what it may? And, to tell the truth, there are not a few in the parlor, who usually would be glad to share the privilege; but to proceed.

"Well, Thomas, how do you like these new ways of going on?" asked Mary, the serious, stiff, time-dried, and smoke-dried head-laundress—a personage of unknown antiquity, and who had been in the family ever since it was a family—addressing the fine powdered gentleman in silk stockings, and pink, white, and silver livery, who leaned negligently against the chimney-piece.

"For my part, I'm glad, indeed, to see serious ways taken up in this house; but how will it suit the rest of you? And especially you, my fine young gentleman?"

"Why," answered Thomas, assuming a grave and thoughtful aspect, "I'm going to confess something which will, perhaps, astonish you, Mistress Mary—and thus it is—if I'd been told twelve months ago that such new regulations were to be introduced into this household, I have very great doubts whether I could have made up my mind to have submitted to them; but within these few hours, dy'e see, there's been a change."

"Bravo, Thomas!" said the butler; "a conversion like—I have heard of such things in my time."

"Call it what you will, Mr. Buckminster, I call it a change—for a change there has been."

"What! well! what!" from different voices round. Do tell us all about it."

"Why, Charles, you were there; and, Mr. Buckminster, you were there too. But Charles is young and giddy; and Mr. Buckminster being always rather of the serious order, very probably the effect you see was not produced so strongly upon either of them as upon me."

"What effect? Well"—

"Why of the grace, as was said before they sat down to dinner."

"The grace! Was it the first time you ever heard grace said, you booby?"

"Yes, I'd heard grace said, I should suppose as often as any as may be here, though, perhaps, not so sensible to its importance and value as some present, meaning you, Mistress Mary. The general, for one, never used to omit it; but, save us! in what a scuffling, careless manner it was said. I protest to you, I thought no more of it than of Mr. Buckminster taking off the covers and handing them to me. Just as a necessary preliminary, as

they say, to the dinner, and nothing on earth more."

"Well, do go on, Thomas. It is very interesting," said Mistress Mary, and the rest gathered closer, all attention.

"Well, I was a going to go scuttling about just as usual, thinking only of not making any noise lest I should see the general—heeding no more of the grace than of what cook was doing at her fire—when that young gentleman, as is come newly among us, bent forward and began to speak it. The effect upon me was wonderful—it was electric—Mr. Buckminster, you know what I mean; I stood as one arrested—I couldn't have moved or not cared if it had been never so—I really couldn't. It seemed to me as if he truly was thanking God for the good things that were set before them. Their plenty, and their comfort, and their abundance; it seemed to me as if things were opened to my mind—what I had never thought of before—who it was, who did give them, and us after them, all sorts of delicacies, and food, and drink, when others might be wanting a morsel of bread; and I seemed to be standing before Him—I felt need to thank Him with the rest. All this flashed through me like lightning; but he had done in a moment, and they all sat down."

"How beautiful Thomas does talk when he has a mind," whispered the under-housemaid to the under-laundress. "What a fine tall young man he is, and what a gift of the gab."

"Well," said the rest, "go on—is there any more?"

"Yes, there is more. Some way I could not get it out of my head—I kept thinking of it all dinner. It was as much as I could do to mind what I was about; and once I made such a clatter in putting a knife and fork upon a plate, that if it hadn't been for the greatest good luck in the world, I should have got it. But the general was talking quite complacent like with the two young gentlemen, and by huge good fortune never heeded."

"Well!"

"Well, when I got into the pantry and began washing up, I had more time for quiet reflection. And this is what I thought. What a lot of lubberly, inanimated, ungrateful, stupid slaves we all must be. Here, serving an earthly master, to the best of our abilities, for a few beggarly pounds, and for his meat and drink and fine clothing; and very well contented, moreover, when there's roast beef of a Sunday, or plum-pudding, and a glass of wine besides on a wedding-day or a birth-day; and thank him, and feel pleased with him, and anxious next day to do better than ordinary, mayhap. And there's the Great Master, the Lord and Giver of all, who made us by his hand, and created us by his power, and feeds us by his bounty, and shelters us by his care; and all for no good of his, but ours—simply ours. For what's he to get of it, but the satisfaction of his merciful and generous spirit, when he sees his poor creatures happy? And we are such dolts! such asses! such brute beasts! such stocks! such stones! that here we go on from day to day, enjoying the life he gives us, eating the bread and meat he gives us, drinking his good refreshments, resting upon his warm beds, and so on. Every day, and every day, and every day—and who among us, I most especially for one, ever thinks, except may be by scuttling through a few rigmorole words—ever thinks, I say, of thanking Him for it—of lifting up a warm, honest heart, of true, real thanking, I mean? Of loving Him the better, and trying to serve and please Him the better, when He, great and powerful as He is, Lord of all the lords, emperors, and kings that ever wore crowns and coronets in this world, condescends to let us thank Him, to like us to thank Him, and to take pleasure in our humble love and service!"

He paused—every eye was fixed upon the speaker.

"And, therefore," continued Thomas, turning to the laundress, who stood there with a tear in her eye; "therefore, Mistress Mary, I am pleased with, and I do like these new ways of going on, as you say; and I bless God, and hope to do it well in my prayers this night, for having at last made of us what I call a regular Christian family."

I have told you, a little in the way of anticipation, that the popularity of Mr. St. Leger's new measures was not confined to the kitchen; but that

the general, by slow steps, gradually conformed to the new usages established at the Hazels.

Lettice and Catherine had not long to take it in turns to stay out with him, playing backgammon, at the time of evening prayers.

At first it was a polite "Oh, pray don't think of staying in the drawing-room upon my account; I can do very well by myself. Next, it was, "Nay, rather than that, I will go into the library, too; why should I not?" He began to feel, at first, probably, from a vague sense of propriety only, but before long from better reasons—that it was not very seemly for the master of the house alone to be absent, when the worship of God was going on in his family.

So there he might, as I told you, ere long be seen, regularly at night, in the morning more and more regularly, muttering the responses between his teeth at first; at length, saying them aloud, and with greater emphasis than any of the rest of the little congregation. His once majestic figure, now bent with age, towering above the rest; and his eagle eye of authority, still astonishingly piercing, rolling round from time to time, upon the watch to detect and rebuke by a glance the slightest sign of inattention upon the part of any of those assembled.

It was a beautiful picture that evening meeting for prayer, for the library was a very ancient room, it having retained the old fittings put in at the time the Hazels was built, some three half centuries ago. The massive and handsome book-cases of dark oak; the family pictures, grim with age, which hung above them; the urns and heads of old philosophers and poets adorning the cornice; the lofty chimney-piece, with the family arms carved and emblazoned over it; the massive oaken chairs, with their dark-green morocco cushions; the reading-desk; the large library table, covered with portfolios of rare prints; and large books containing fine illustrated editions of the standard authors of England; gave a somewhat serious, almost religious aspect to the apartment.

Mrs. Melwyn, in her soft gray silks and fine laces; her fair, colorless cheek; her tender eyes bent downward; her devout, gentle, meek, humble attitude and expression; Catherine by her side, in all the full bloom of health and happiness; that charming-looking, handsome Edgar; and Lettice, with so much character in her countenance, seated upon one side of the room, formed a charming row of listening faces, with this rugged, magnificent-looking old general at their head.

On the opposite side were the grave, stern, old housekeeper, so fat, so grave, and so imposing; Mrs. Melwyn's new maid, a pretty young woman, in the lightest possible apology for a cap, trimmed with pink ribbons; the laundress, so serious, and sitting stiff and starched as one of her own clear muslins; the cook and housemaid looking as attentive as they could; and the under-servants staring with vacant eyes—eyes that looked as if they were ready to drop out of their heads; Mr. Buckminster, as the charming Dickens has it, so "respectable;" Thomas, all spirit and enthusiasm; and Charles doing all in his power not to fall asleep.

At the table the young minister, with that interesting and most delicate face of his; his tall, wasted figure bending forward, his fair, emaciated hands resting upon the book, from which, in a voice low and feeble, but most penetrating and sweet, he read.

They would come back to the drawing-room in such a composed, happy, cheerful frame of mind. The general more remarkably so. He felt more self-satisfaction than the others, because the course of proceeding was so new to him that he imagined it to be very particularly meritorious. A bit of a pharisee you will think, but not the least of that, I assure you. Only people, at their first trying of such paths, do often find them most peculiarly paths of pleasantness and ways of peace; and, this sort of peace, this being at ease with the conscience, is, to be sure, very soothing and comfortable.

In short, nothing could proceed better than things did; and every one was quite content but the charming match-maker, Catherine.

She watched, and watched with the greatest interest; but watch as she might, she could detect

no symptoms of falling in love upon the part of Mr. St. Leger.

He spent, indeed, the whole of his mornings either in his room or in the library, absorbed in the books of divinity, of which there happened to be a very valuable collection, a collection which had slept undisturbed upon the shelves for many and many a long year. These afforded to him a source of interest and improvement which he had never enjoyed since he had left the too often neglected library of the small college where he had been educated. He was ready to devour them. Every moment of time he considered his own—and the whole of the morning was chiefly at his disposal—was devoted to them; with the exception, be it mentioned, of a large portion, which, when the weather would allow, was spent in visiting among the poor at that end of the parish.

At dinner Mr. St. Leger for the first time joined the family party. When he did, however, it must be confessed, he made ample amends for his absence, and was excessively agreeable. He had great powers of conversation, and evidently considered it his duty to exert himself to raise the tone of conversation at the general's table, so as to make the time pass pleasantly with the old man. In this Edgar and Catherine seconded him to the best of their power.

Lettice said little. She sat at the bottom of the table, by Mr. St. Leger; but though he often addressed her—taking care that she should not feel left out—as did Catherine also, she was very silent. She had not, indeed, much that she could venture to say. When conversation took this higher tone, she felt afraid of her own ignorance; and then she first knew what it was to lament not having a better education.

As they grew more intimate—for people who sit side by side at dinner every day cannot help growing intimate—Mr. St. Leger would gently remark upon this reserve; and one day he began to speak openly upon the subject. He had attributed her silence, I believe, to a bashful feeling of inferiority in rank; for her face was so intelligent and full of meaning, that he did not divine its real cause, so he said, with a certain gentle abruptness which became him much:

"I have discovered a fault in you, Miss Arnold, at last; though everybody here seems to think it impossible you should have one. May I tell you of it?"

"Oh! if you once begin with my faults, I am afraid you will never have done. I know the length of the score that might be summed up against me, though others are so good-natured as to forget it. Yes, indeed, I shall be much obliged to you."

"Don't you think it is the duty of all to exert themselves in a family party, to make conversation circulate in an agreeable manner?"

"To be sure, I do—and how well you perform that duty," she was prompted to say, but she did not. She hesitated a little, and then added: "And, perhaps, you think I do not do that so much as I ought to do."

"Precisely. You will not be angry. No, you cannot be angry. You never are. The most trying and provoking things, I observe, cannot ruffle you. So I will venture to say, that I don't think you play fair by me. We are both here chiefly to make ourselves agreeable, I believe; and I sometimes wish I had a little more assistance in that duty from one who, I am sure, could perform it admirably, if she so pleased."

Lettice shook her head. Then she said, with her usual simplicity, "I used to talk more before you came."

"Did you? But that's not quite generous, is it, to throw the whole burden upon me now I am come, instead of sharing it? Why will you not talk now?"

"Simply, because I can't. Oh, Mr. St. Leger! talk is so different since you came here, and I feel my own incapacity so sadly—my own ignorance so forcibly—I should say so painfully; but that, indeed, is not my own fault, and that takes the worst pain, you know, out of things."

"Ignorant!" he said: "of what?"

"Of all these things you talk about. I used to pick up a little from the newspapers, but now I have done reading them I seem literally to know nothing."

"Nothing! Nothing about books, I suppose you

mean: for you seem to me to understand men and things better than most people I have met with."

"I have experienced more, perhaps, than most girls of my age have done, through my poverty and misfortunes; but what is that?"

"Ah, Miss Arnold! what is it but the best part of all knowledge; to understand one's self and others; the best of all possessions; to possess one's own spirit. But I beg your pardon, I will only add, that I do not, by what I say, intend at all to undervalue the advantages of reading, or the happiness of having a love of reading. Do you love reading?"

"Why, I don't quite know. I find the books I read aloud to Mrs. Melwyn often very tiresome, I must confess."

"And what sort of books do you read to Mrs. Melwyn?"

"Why, only two sorts—novels and essays."

He laughed a little in his quiet way, and then said: "I wonder at any young lady disliking novels; I thought it was the very reading they liked best; but as for essays, with very few exceptions, I must own I share in your distaste for them."

"I can't understand them very often. I am ashamed to say it; but the writers use such fine language and such strange new words, and then they go over and over again upon the same thought, and illustrate it twenty different ways, when one happy illustration, I think, would be so much better; I like a writer who marches promptly through a subject; those essayists seem as if they never could have done."

"What you say is just, in many instances, I think. It is a pity to have not tried other reading. History, travels, poetry; you cannot think how pleasantly such subjects seem to fill and enlarge the mind. And if you have a little time of your own, you cannot easily believe, perhaps, how much may be done. Even with an hour each day, of steady reading, a vast deal."

"Ah! but where shall I begin? Everybody reads Hume's History of England first, and I have never even done that; and if I were to begin I should never get to the end of it."

"Oh, yes, but you would, and be surprised to find how soon that end had arrived, and what a pleasant journey you had made. But if you are frightened at Hume, and I own he looks formidable, let me select you something in the library, to commence operations with, which will not be quite so alarming."

"Oh! if you would"—

"With the greatest pleasure in the world. If you will allow me to assist you a little in the choice of your books, I think, with the virtue of perseverance, and I know you have all the virtues, you would get through a great deal in a comparatively short space of time; and when I reflect how much it would add to your happiness, as it does to every one's happiness, I confess I cannot feel easy till I have set you going."

This conversation had been carried on in a low voice, while the rest had been talking over some family matters together. The speakers at the head of the table stopped, and the silence aroused the two. Catherine glanced at them suddenly; she saw Lettice color a little, but Mr. St. Leger preserved the most provoking composure.

The evenings Mr. St. Leger devoted exclusively to the good pleasure of the general. He read the newspapers, making them the vehicle of the most intelligent and agreeable comments; he looked out the places mentioned in the maps, and had something perpetually to say that was interesting of this or that. He answered every question the general wanted solved in the cleverest manner; and, in short, he so won upon the old man's heart, that he became quite attached to him. The evenings, once so heavy, and spent in a sort of irritable fretfulness, became quite delightful to him; nor were they less delightful to others. At last, things came to that pass that the wearisome backgammon was given up, and reading aloud took its place. The ladies worked and read in turns, Edgar taking double tides, and Mr. St. Leger doing a little, which he insisted upon, assuring them that it did not hurt his chest at all. He was, indeed, getting stronger and better every day; he was a beautiful reader.

Lettice sat plying her busy needle, but with a countenance so filled with intelligent pleasure, that it is not to be wondered at if Mr. St. Leger, when

his reading was over, and he had nothing else to do, and, the books being usually such as he was well acquainted with, not much at the moment to think of, took pleasure in observing her.

He had not forgotten his promise of selecting authors for her own private studies; he seemed to take much benevolent pleasure in endeavoring to compensate to this generous and excellent creature, for the intellectual disadvantages of a life devoted to others as hers had been. He usually, also, found or made an opportunity for talking over with her what she had been reading; and, he believed, in all sincerity, and so did she, that he was actuated in these proceedings merely, as I said, by the disinterested desire of offering compensation for past sacrifices; stimulated by the very high value he himself attached to mental cultivation, regarding it as the best source of independent happiness both for men and women.

But whatever were the motives with which he began his labor of kindness, it is certain as he proceeded therein a vast deal more interest and pleasure were mingled up with this little task than had been the case at first.

Her simple, unaffected purity of heart; her single-mindedness, unstained by selfish thought, pride, or vanity, or folly, its simplicity and singleness of purpose, were displayed before him. The generous benevolence of purpose; the warm and grateful piety; the peculiar right-mindedness; the unaffected love for all that was excellent, true, good, or beautiful, and the happy facility of detecting all that was good or beneficial wherever it was to be found, and wherever observed; the sweet cheerfulness and repose of the character; that resemblance to a green field, which I have heard a husband of only too sensitive a nature gratefully attribute to his partner; all this worked strongly, though unmarked.

Mr. St. Leger began to experience a sense of sweetness, solace, and enjoyment, in the presence of Lettice Arnold, that he had not found upon this earth for years, and which he never hoped to find again.

But all this time he never dreamed of falling in love. His imagination never traveled so far as to think of such a thing as appropriating this rare blessing to himself. To live with her was his destiny at present, and that seemed happiness enough; and, indeed he scarcely had got so far as to acknowledge to his own heart, how much happiness that privilege conferred.

She, on her side, was equally tranquil, undisturbed by the slightest participation in the romance Catherine would so gladly have commenced. She went on contentedly, profiting by his instructions, delighting in his company, and adoring his goodness; but would as soon have thought of appropriating some "bright particular star" to herself as this gifted man.

She deemed him too infinitely her superior.

Well, it is no use keeping the matter in suspense any longer. You all see how it must end.

You do not fret and worry yourselves as Catherine did, and abuse Mr. St. Leger for his indifference. You see plainly enough that two such very nice people, and so excellently suited to each other, must, thrown together as they were every day, end by liking each other; which, but for the previous arrangements of the excellent Catherine, would have been a very perplexing business to all parties.

When at last—just before Edgar and his wife were going to sail for Canada, and he and she were making their farewell visit at the Hazels—when at last Mr. St. Leger, after having looked for two or three days very miserable, and having avoided every one, and particularly poor Lettice—to whom he had not spoken a word all that time, and who was miserable at the idea that she must have offended him—when at last, he took Edgar out walking, and then confessed that he thought it no longer right, safe, or honorable, for him to remain at the Hazels, finding, as he did, that one creature was becoming too dear to him; and he trembled every moment, lest by betraying his secret he might disturb her serenity. When at last the confession was made, and Edgar reported it to his wife—then Catherine was ready to jump for joy. In vain Edgar strove to look wise—and tell her to be reasonable. In vain he represented

all the objections that must be urged against her out-of-the-way scheme, as he was ill-natured enough to call it. She would hear of none.

No, nothing. She was perfectly unreasonable—her husband told her so—but it was all in vain. Men are more easily discouraged at the idea of any proceeding out of the usual course than women are. They do not, I think, set so much value upon *abstract* happiness, if I may use the term; they think more of the attending circumstances, and less of that one ingredient—genuine happiness—than women do.

Catherine could and would think of nothing else, but how perfectly these two were suited to each other, and how excessively happy they would be.

Dear, good thing! how she labored in the cause, and what a world of contradiction and trouble she had to go through. First, there was Mr. St. Leger himself, to be persuaded to be happy upon her plan, the only possible plan under the circumstances; then there was Lettice to persuade that Mr. St. Leger's happiness and dignity would not be hazarded; then there was Edgar to reason out of calling her romantic; and last of all there was the general, for Mrs. Melwyn, I consider, as Catherine did, already persuaded.

This last task *did* appear formidable. She put it off as long as she could; she got everybody else in the right frame of mind before she ventured upon it; she had persuaded both Edgar and Mrs. Melwyn to second her, if need were, and at length, with a dreadful feeling of trepidation, she broached the subject to the old veteran. With all the coolness she could muster she began her speech, and laid the whole matter before him. He did not interrupt her while she spoke by one single word, or remark, good, bad, or indifferent. It was awful—her poor little heart fluttered, as if it were going to stop; she expected the storm every instant to burst forth in some terrible outbreak. She sat there shuddering at her own rashness. If even Edgar had called her absurd, what would her father do! If St. Leger himself had been so difficult to manage, what would the old general say! He said nothing. She would not be discouraged; she began to speak again, to recapitulate every argument; she warmed with the subject; she was earnest, eloquent, pathetic—tears were in the good creature's eyes; still he was silent. At last, wearied out with useless exertion, she ceased to urge the matter any further; and endeavoring to conquer her feelings of deep disappointment, looked up in his face to see whether the slightest relenting expression was visible in it. No; his eyes were fixed upon the floor; he seemed lost in deep thought.

"Papa," she ventured to say, "have you heard all I have been saying?"

"Yes, child."

Silence again for a few minutes, then:

"Catherine, did you ever know me do a good action in your life?"

"Dear papa, what a question!"

"Did you ever know me, I say, to do one thoroughly generous, benevolent action without regard to self in the slightest degree—such as I call—such as alone merits the name of a really *good* action? If you ever did, I can't easily forgive you."

"Dearest papa! what have I done? Did I ever say? Did I ever hint? Dear papa!" and she looked ready to cry.

"Did you ever?—no—I know you never did."

"Don't say so—don't think so badly of me, papa."

"I'm not thinking badly of you, child—God forbid; for well he knows if I ever did one really generous, benevolent action—one without reference to self. Heaven bless thee, thou dearest thing, thy life seems only made up of such actions; but I say again, did you ever? No; I know you never did—and I'll tell you why I know it."

"Ah, papa! What *can* you mean?"

"Because," he went on without seeming to mind her emotion, "because, I observe, that whenever you want to persuade other people—your mother, or Edgar, or Lettice, for instance—to do something you've set your heart upon, you ~~hurry~~—you always enlarge upon the happiness

it will give to other people; but when you're trying to come round me, you only talk of how comfortable it will make myself."

She could only utter a faint exclamation. The accusation, if accusation it may be called, was not to be denied.

"Now, Catherine, since this young man came into the house, what with his conversation, he's a most gentlemanlike, agreeable converser as ever I met with, and the prayers, and the chapters, and such like; and, in short, a certain new tone of thought altogether; there has been gradually something new growing up in me. I have at times begun to think back upon my life, and to recollect what a nasty, mean, greedy, calculating, selfish fellow I've been throughout, never troubling myself about other people's comforts, or so on, but going on as if every body was only created to promote mine; and I'd have been glad, Catherine, before I went into my grave, which won't be long too—I own to you I would have been glad, for once in my life, to have done a purely good, unselfish thing—made a sacrifice, as you pious folk call it; and, therefore, to own the truth, I have been very sorry, and could not help feeling disappointed, as here you've sat prosing this half hour and more, showing me what a great deal I was to get by this notable arrangement of yours."

"Papa! dearest, dear papa!"

"Be quiet—I have indeed—I'd have liked to have had something to give up, instead of its being, as I verily believe it is, the most charmingly delightful scheme for your mother and me that ever was hit upon, for that man is the happiness of my life, my body's comfort and my soul's health, and Lettice is more like a dear child than anything else to that poor mother of yours, whom I have not, perhaps, been so considerate of as I ought; and to have them thus fixed together in this house, is better luck than could be conceived, such as scarcely ever happens in this world to anybody; and far better than I—almost better than your poor mother deserves. So you're a darling little, courageous creature for planning it, when I'll be bound they all thought you a fool, so have it all your own way, and give your old father a kiss," which she joyfully did. "And now you go to Mr. St. Leger, and tell him from me, that if he consents to this scheme I shall esteem it the greatest favor and satisfaction that was ever conferred upon me in my life. I know what it is to be thus trusted by such a man—I know the confidence on his part which such an arrangement implies—and you may add, that if he will only extend to me his usual indulgence for human folly and frailty, I will do everything that is in the power of an ill-tempered, good-for-nothing, selfish old fellow, to prevent him repenting his bargain. And tell Lettice she's a darling, excellent creature; and I have thought so long, though I have said little about it, and she has been like an angel of love and peace in our family; and if she will only go on as she has done, she will make us all as happy as the day is long; and tell your mother I wish I did not enjoy the thoughts of this so much myself, that I might have the pleasure of making an offering of my satisfaction to her."

"Dear!—dear beloved papa!"

"Stop a little, child; Edgar and you will have to pay the piper, you know."

"Oh, gladly! thankfully!"

"Because, you see, my dear, if these two people marry and live with us, and become as children, I must treat them, in a manner, as children, and make a little codicil to my will; and you and Edgar will be something the worse for it. But, bless you, child, there's enough for all."

"And bless you, my honored, generous father, for thinking so; that there is. Edgar and I only earnestly desired this; thank you, thank you, ten thousand times."

I will only detain you for a few moments longer, to tell you that the scheme was carried into execution, and fully answered the hopes of the generous contriver.

Mr. St. Leger found, in the attachment of Lettice, a compensation for the cruel sufferings of his past life; and, under her tender and assiduous care, he speedily recovered his health and his powers of usefulness. She, while performing a woman's best and happiest part, that of proving the true happiness of an admirable and a superior man,

contrived likewise to fulfill all her other duties in the most complete and exemplary manner.

It would be difficult to say, whether the happiness she felt or conferred was the greater.

Exceptional people may venture upon exceptional measures. Those who are a great deal more sweet tempered, and loving, and good, and reasonable than others, may venture to seek happiness in ways that the generality would be mad to attempt.

And sensible, well-principled, right-tempered human beings, one may take into close family intimacy, and discard that reserve, and those arm's-length proceedings, which people's faults, in too many cases, render prudent and necessary.

It was because the subjects of Catherine's scheme were so excellent, that the object of them was so wise.

I have now told you how perfectly they answered upon trial; and I am only sorry that the world contains so very few with whom one could venture to make the same experiment.

For a very large portion of possible happiness is thrown away, because people are not fit to take part in plans of this nature—plans wherein one shall give what he has, to receive back what he wants; and thus the true social communism be established.

[THE END.]

A BOLD RAID.

In the summer of 1809, when Napoleon overran Austria for the third time and besieged Vienna, a part of his army was in Italy, under Eugene Beauharnais, the French emperor's stepson, slowly following the Austrians, who were retiring to the north under the Archduke Charles. They were in Lombardy, as the northern part of Italy was then called, and General Colbert commanded a brigade of cavalry in the advance of the French army.

It was a clear, still morning, just before sunrise, and thousands of little twinkling points, scattered over the landscape, revealed themselves as the camp-fires of the French army. A group of white tents, the only ones in sight, were the headquarters of the advance cavalry, for the French only allowed tents to those superior officers who were obliged to consult maps which required shelter.

The sleepers round the fires were beginning to stir about, and the low hum of conversation was increasing every moment, while the long lines of cavalry horses were pawing the ground impatiently at the picket-ropes, and whinnying for their morning feed.

Around the headquarters all was still silent; a dismounted sentry was pacing slowly up and down in front of the general's tent, when the regular muffled beats of a horse at a gallop were suddenly heard, and a mounted orderly dashed up to headquarters, and pulled up in front of the general's tent.

"General Colbert's quarters?" he asked.

"Ay, ay," said the sentry, a little gruffly, for he felt chilly. "Any orders?"

"Yes, from the viceroy," said the orderly, swinging himself from the saddle. "Rouse him up, chasseur. They are marked immediate."

The sentry knocked at the tent door, and before he had time to speak, out stepped a tall, slender young officer, with very sharp black eyes, and a long, heavy black moustache.

Early as it was, his uniform was as neat, his hair as well brushed, as if he had been up some time, and his dark picturesque chasseur dolman and pelisse, his closely-fitting buckskin breeches and polished Hessians, were fresh and unwrinkled.

"I am General Colbert's aide-de-camp. Give me the orders," he said, curtly; and the orderly obeyed, saluting.

The young aide disappeared into the tent, where a stern, gray-headed old officer was sitting up in his camp-bed, listening.

"Orders from the viceroy, general."

The general opened the big envelope, with its red seal, and ran it over hastily.

"Ha—um—very good—certainly," he muttered. "Here, Curley, a little work for you, my boy. His

highness orders me to send a trustworthy officer, with a hundred men, to reconnoitre the Austrian march, and find whether they are retiring on Venice or into the Tyrol. Take Guerin's squadron and be off. Report to me to-morrow morning. Good-bye."

And the old general threw him the order, turned over, and went to sleep again; for it was one of his fixed principles never to get up till his column was ready to move.

Curely never smiled. He merely saluted, turned on his heel, and left the tent. He knew he was going on a difficult and dangerous duty, but the general trusted him so implicitly that he felt the very going to sleep as a compliment.

Half an hour later the early rays of the sun shone on long lines of stamping horses, eating their corn and switching away the flies, while the cavalry soldiers were brushing and scraping with great diligence, and the clicking of curry-combs and brushes was incessant. Through the midst of the lines a small compact column of horsemen, three abreast, was trotting gently out towards the dim veil of smoke in the distance, that told of the Austrian outposts.

"Hilloa, Curely, whither bound?" asked the captain of a horse battery, as the column passed him, headed by the lithe, nervous-looking young aide.

Curely smiled.

"Who knows?" he answered. "Perhaps to Vienna, perhaps to Naples. *Au revoir*."

"You won't get much out of Curely when he's under orders," remarked another officer, as the column trotted by. "He keeps a close mouth, but he thinks—*morbleu*, how he thinks! You'll hear of him before very long."

Meantime Curely, at the head of his little column of horse, had passed the furthest camp, and come out behind the line of outposts which stretched far out in front of the cavalry towards the Austrians. The country was flat and monotonous, full of rich fields, winding roads, little villages scattered around, while patches of wood here and there prevented anything like an extensive view.

The faint line of blue smoke in the distance told of the Austrian army, but not a soul was to be seen on their outposts. Curely's task was to find out where they were going, and it was by no means easy.

As soon as he found himself behind the French line of outposts, the young captain turned sharp to the right, and rode straight away behind the line at a quick trot, followed by the troopers.

His men were all picked chasseurs, wearing the same rich dress as himself. A black fur busby, dark green jacket and pelisse barred with black, tight breeches and Hessian boots, sabre, carbine, and pistols to each man, low, sturdy horses, with a single day's forage slung at the saddle—such was the appearance of Curely's little troop seventy years ago.

Pretty soon they had passed the last outpost on the right, and struck out into the solitary fields, which looked as silent, once the army was passed, as if the country had been stricken with the plague.

For at least half an hour after leaving the army Curely kept his frot, till he had crossed a number of fields and entered a quiet, shady road, sheltered with trees on both sides, and marked with old, faint ruts that told of infrequent travel.

As soon as he reached this road he turned into it, and followed it at an easy walk, in silence, for some time.

Ordinarily he was quite a fluent talker, but this day he was unusually silent, and the officer of the squadron found it impossible to extract a word from him. He was constantly glancing nervously into the openings between the trees far ahead, as if watching for something.

There was very little conversation in the column behind; moreover, the men knew they were away from their own army, and soldiers are much like sheep, timid in a strange place.

At last Curely nodded his head sharply, as something caught his eye. Compressing his lips, he exclaimed: "I thought so!" and his face cleared up.

Captain Guerin laughed a little sulkily.

"You've had time enough to think, I should

say. Not a word to be got out of you for the last hour. Where are we going, if the question is admissible?"

Curely turned to him.

"I can tell you now. We are going to visit the Archduke Charles at his quarters."

Guerin stared. Then he burst out laughing.

"Well, they call you a dare-devil, Curely, but I think that will puzzle even you. How do you propose to get there?"

"Listen," said Curely, in a low tone. "Look over to our left front. Do you see those white specks?"

Guerin peered under his hand in the direction indicated, and exhibited traces of excitement.

"By heavens! it is the enemy's wagon train! But you can't surely intend to attack it with this handful."

"Not a bit of it. My orders are to find where the Austrians are going, and no one can tell us that but their general. You see their patrolling is slack. We are quite outside all their flankers, and they have not seen us. I intend to go into camp with them to-night. Headquarters are sure to be near the wagon train. Let us trot."

As he spoke he quickened his pace, and the little column trotted on for another half-hour, till they had placed at least a dozen miles between themselves and their morning bivouac. The road they followed diverged from the line of march pursued by the distant wagon train, and led them at last to a small Italian village, where their arrival produced a great panic.

Curely rode into the place full gallop before anyone could escape, and had it surrounded with his men while the inhabitants were still huddled on the village green. There he saw in front of the village inn two cavalry horses with the Austrian eagle on their trappings.

As soon as the villagers found that the newcomers were French they laid aside their fears, for they had always favored their allies as much as they hated the Germans. A few words from Curely, followed by the clink of gold, and the two Austrian riders were pulled out of the inn, proving to be Hungarian hussars, who had wandered off, intending to plunder and desert, ending by falling into the enemy's hands.

A few close questions, enforced by the sight of a cocked pistol, and the prisoners told where they had heard the Austrian headquarters were to be fixed that night—a small village about twelve miles from where they then were.

Curely engaged one of the principal villagers as a guide, and started off at the same rapid pace, taking the prisoners with him. In less than two hours he was in full sight of the promised village, where not an Austrian had yet arrived.

The village was very small, containing not more than twenty houses, surrounded by vineyards, and a wide, bare-looking, sandy plain, thinly covered with coarse grass, made an undiscovered approach quite impracticable.

This plain was about three-quarters of a mile wide, and Curely halted in a thick wood at its edge, in the middle of the afternoon. Then he hid away all his men in the thickets, cautioning them to silence, and the most difficult part of his task was over.

He was all alone, undiscovered, full in the rear of the Austrian army, having circled round them successfully.

No sooner were his men settled comfortably feeding their horses than the dust of the Austrian trains began to become visible, and Curely, hiding at the edge of the wood, coolly watched wagon after wagon go into park on the other side of the village, while the retreating army slowly followed its train.

The sun went down, and still they kept coming, and sure enough, Curely saw the headquarter flag, followed by the glittering staff of the archduke, enter the village, while the tents sprang up on the other side. He was just congratulating himself on the success of his plans when he received a sudden check.

A trampling and bellowing was heard in the underbrush behind him, as a great herd of cattle came through, and the voices of the herdsmen, driving their charges home, warned him that his men would be discovered in another moment.

Here Curely's decision and promptness were admirable. He ran back to his men with drawn sabre, and before the astonished herdsmen knew what had happened they found themselves prisoners and tied to trees. Then, giving the word all the chasseurs led out their horses, mixed up with the cattle, and walked boldly towards the village in the gloom.

The ruse was perfectly successful. Without exciting a breath of distrust they entered the village, and Curely advanced right up to the little inn where the archduke was quartered, as if he belonged there, and peered into the ground-floor window. Three generals were at a table covered with papers. Then a rough hand seized Curely, as the archduke's sentry spluttered out:

"Gott in himmel! what are you doing here?"

Curely, like a flash, shot the man dead, and at the signal his chasseurs leaped on their horses, and began to shoot in all directions. Curely dashed into the general's room, firing a second pistol into the midst of the group, smashing the window as he went, and followed by Guerin, also firing.

With singular haste and unanimity the Austrian generals tumbled out of the door, shouting for help as Curely swept every paper from the table in a bunch, and escaped, as he had entered, unharmed.

In another minute he and his men were galloping down the street and back to their own army, amid a perfect Babel of confusion, quite unmolested. In five minutes they were back in the wood, amid perfect quiet, for the Austrian cavalry was all unsaddled, and so demoralized as to be unable to organize a successful pursuit.

Curely, without having lost man or horse, trotted off up to the road he had come, and was rewarded, in an hour more, by the sight of the French watchfires, glittering to the right not a mile off.

Before midnight he and his general were laughing over his successful scout, and inspecting the written orders of the archduke, which Curely had snatched so cleverly. He had found where the Austrians were going, and had settled the whole plan of a campaign by his daring and subtlety.

THE DREAM.

"'Twas but a dream," exclaimed young Blanch, starting from sleep upon the cold ground, where we bivouacked on the night before the storming of Badajos. And can man sleep sound, methinks I hear the reader ask, in such circumstances as these? Yes, if mind and body be as they ought, the soldier on his clay couch on the battle eve, and the sailor cradled on the surge, and rocked by the storm, enjoy a repose which luxury never knew, and which monarchs sigh for in vain.

I was then lying close beside Blanch, but had been awake some time before him; and, by the light of a fire which we had kindled previous to repose, I had been watching the face of the fair boy as it expressed the passing emotions of his mind, when lapsing through the mysterious changes of his dream.

At first his still, pale features exhibited the blessed calm of a pure and peaceful sleep.

Anon they became gently moved, like the moon-lit lake by the passing breath of night, and at length were gradually lighted up with a smile so celestial that I could fancy his spirit was basking in the beams of Heaven.

The night-flame played with its wavering glare upon his face, whose beauty thus broke forth in fitful gleams, even as the faces of departed friends come back upon our slumbers in glimpses from the grave.

"Happy boy," thought I; "while thy young frame is lying on the cold clay, thy spirit hath a sweet reprieve from the horrors of war, and is even now, perchance, far away in thy own land, where the smiles of friends, and the caresses of thy little sister, receive thee back to thy father's halls, where there is joy for thy return, and where thy mother is weeping thy welcome home."

My soliloquy was suddenly broken, for Blanch awakened with a start, and, looking round him with a wild and forlorn gaze, sobbed out:

"'Twas but a dream."

"It seems to have been a pleasant one, however, if I may judge from the regretful tone of your words on awakening," said I, not without a feeling of curiosity to know in what its happiness had consisted.

"It was indeed," rejoined my friend, "but brief as it was blest—so it is soon told. I am now about that age when it is supposed we are most susceptible of the tender passion; yet have I never felt love for woman till this night, when such a being as seemed wanting to me in the waking world was given to me in sleep. Oh! she was so passing fair, and so seraph-like! Nay, smile not, because it was a dream. I, too, can smile at dreams, but, in this instance, the form and features of the unknown were so distinctly delineated, and shadowed forth with such arbitrary truth, as never belonged to the formations of mere fancy, and can never be effaced from my brain.

"I do believe—nay, I feel certain, that such a being somewhere exists; and, to see her with waking eyes, and find favor in her sight, I would willingly lay down my life."

I could not help smiling at this burst of boyish enthusiasm, and at what appeared to me the very mockery of imagination—by which the bewitched Blanch had become enamoured of the phantom of his own brain, and was incurably in love with the lady of a dream; but, had I been the most incredulous and cruel interpreter of midnight mysteries, I could not have found in my heart to apply the rule of explaining by contraries these dark hints of the future, and boding ill to poor Blanch, because the vision of a beautiful girl had soothed his slumbers on the eve of storming a city—an event which took place on the following night.

Talk of war, that is, war in the open field, where man meets man on an equality, where the chances of death are much alike, where valor may avail, and where there is something like fair play—but the storming of strongholds is unmasked murder, and the sack of cities the revelry of the furies.

The assault on the town of Badajos was a festival for fiends.

The eternal foe himself, the immortal enemy of man, might have gloated over it, and smiled at his own foul work; and, if ever laughter was heard in hades, it was surely on that night of horror.

Bastions and parapets bristled with *chevaux-de-frise* of sharp-pointed irons, bayonets, sword-blades, and every kind of deadly obstruction, which met our troops, as one by one they scaled walls of more than thirty feet high, and in succession were shot, bayoneted, and hurled back into the ditches below.

I have heard it said that Wellington himself appeared much agitated, as, by the death-flames

which illumined the horrors of the night, he saw his troops foiled in their desperate and successive efforts against almost superhuman obstacles—but that a lightning gleam of triumph flushed over his face, and an exclamation of "Thank God!" escaped him, when an aide-de-camp galloped up with this brief announcement:

"My lord, General Picton is in the castle with a thousand men."

I said he was enabled to see how matters went on by the death-lights which illumined the darkness; for, from breach and bastion, hand-grenades, blazing bombs, and all manner of combustibles rolled down like a volcano torrent; while a tempest of shot and shell rang through the air, like the rushing of a mighty whirlwind; and, when at length an entrance into the town was forced by our troops, over steel-hedged walls, and breaches vomiting floods of fire—mines ready to be sprung yawned beneath their trembling path, and they swept along through the gloom, amid roaring of cannon, shouts of victory and vengeance, blasts of bugles sounding the charge, and shrieks of the sacked city, all rending the midnight sky, like a chorus from the bottomless pit.

The work of destruction was nearly over, when I found myself with a party of our men in one of the more retired streets, in passing along which we suddenly encountered some French soldiers in the act of quitting a large and noble-looking mansion, where the love of plunder had induced them to linger somewhat too long, for in an instant they were bayoneted by our troops against the wall.

It was then that, thinking I heard the voice of moaning within, I entered the house; a large but dimly-lighted apartment lay before me, into which I advanced, and by the flame of the glimmering lamp, beheld the body of a young lady stretched upon the floor, and that of a British officer extended by her side.

Approaching and holding the lamp to the face of the former, I looked upon a creature lovely in death, although her features bore the expression of recent agony; and her hair, all clotted with gore, streamed down over her bosom, from which the warm current of her heart had gushed through a ghastly wound.

I then turned the lamp to the face of the officer, in whom, with a start of horror, I recognized my poor friend Blanch, steeped in blood; and, though he still breathed, it was evident his wounds were mortal, and that his end was near.

In a short time, however, he opened his eyes, and, gazing on my face, held out his hand in token of recognition.

The only restorative which I had about me was a little brandy in a flask, which I applied to his

lips, and, in a few minutes, he rallied so much as to be able to speak, and thank me; and with his dying breath to explain the circumstances in which I had found him.

They were to the following effect:

After an entrance into the town had been effected, in rushing along the streets with a party of his regiment, during the confusion of the scene and darkness of the night, Blanch was separated from them, and after a long and fruitless search, found himself at the door of the house in which we then were.

Hearing a noise within, he suspected that some of our soldiers might be plundering; with the view of preventing which, he entered, at the hazard of his life, and had just reached the room where he then lay, when a door at the opposite end of it flew open, and, in breathless terror, as if flying from pursuit, a young Spanish lady rushed into the room.

Upon seeing the stranger she made a sudden pause, during which, with mute amazement, he recognized in the fair girl before him the living form of her whose shadowy similitude had appeared in his slumbers on the preceding night; but tenfold was that amazement increased, when, ere he could speak, she exclaimed, with wild energy:

"Mysterious Heaven! It is he—'tis he himself!—the very being of my dream, who appeared to me last night, and is now come to take me away from the horrors of this dreadful place!"

At that moment, and before he could reply, a party of the enemy who had been searching the house in quest of pillage, burst into the room, and the sight of a British officer on such an occasion so exasperated the marauders, that, setting up a savage yell, they flew upon him with their bayonets, and the poor Spanish girl, who threw herself between them and their victim, received her death-wound at the same moment with him she tried to save.

Blanch could say no more—his tale was told, and his life was fast ebbing away—his speech faltered—his voice sank into a whisper, and the signs of death were upon him.

He motioned me to raise his head, which I had no sooner done than his eyes began to fix in the death-glaze, and, drawing in his breath for the last time, with a long, deep sigh he expired.

He sleeps in the same grave with his beautiful unknown—for unknown to each other they had lived—had seen each other only in a vision, and had loved in a dream, and on a night of storm and death they met in this waking world only to be parted forever.

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